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BANDWAGON

JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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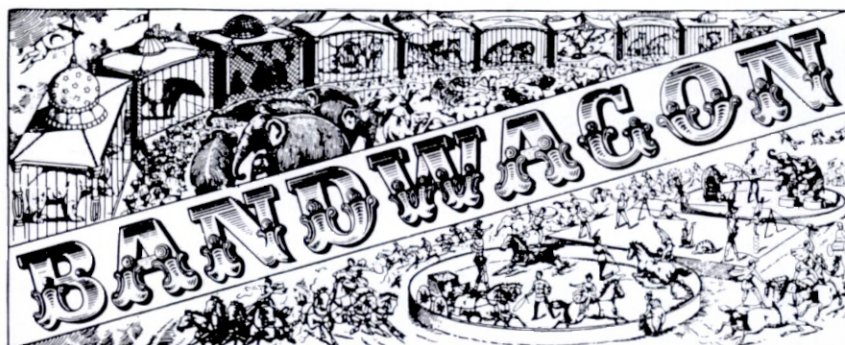
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MARCH-APRIL 1984



THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 28, No. 2

MARCH-APRIL 1984

Fred D. Pfening, Jr., Editor

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor and Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

BANDWAGON, The Journal of the Circus Historical Society, is published bi-monthly. Editorial, Advertising and Circulation office is located at 2515 Dorset Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43221. Advertising rates are: Full page \$85.00, Half page \$45.00, Quarter page \$25.00. Minimum ad \$18.00. Phone (614) 294-5361.

Subscription rates \$16.00 per year to members, \$16.00 per year to non-members in the United States, \$18.00 per year outside the U.S.A. Single copies \$2.50 each plus 90¢ postage.

BANDWAGON (USPS 406-390) is published bi-monthly at \$16.00 per year by the Circus Historical Society, 800 Richey Rd., Zanesville, Ohio 43701. Second class postage paid at Columbus, Ohio. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BANDWAGON, 1075 West Fifth Ave., Columbus, Ohio 43212.

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THIS MONTH'S COVER

In retrospect, May 19, 1884 was an important date in circus history because on that day the Ringling brothers entered the business. Less well known, but also significant was May 3, 1890 which was the date the show became a railroad circus. When the sixteen cars, many of which had been purchased from Adam Forepaugh, pulled out of Baraboo the next day, it marked the start of the show's phenomenal growth in the 1890s. From eighteen cars in 1890 (two advance cars traveled ahead), it grew to a total of thirty-one cars in 1892; forty-seven cars in 1895; and fifty-seven cars in 1898. Today's Ringling-Barnum organization can trace its roots back to that day as much as to the time six years earlier when the tent was first pitched.

This advertising booklet from their first railroad date left no doubt about their mode of transportation. Curiously, they

stated it was their tenth year, while in reality it was only the seventh. This sixteen page courier was printed on dark green paper by the Empire Show Printing Company of Chicago, and measures 7" by 10". Original in Pfening Archives.

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Sunbury, Penn. 17801

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Harry Rose 2554
39 Clarke Ave.
St. Andrews, Bedfordview
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BANDWAGON PUBLICATION DATES

The Editor continues to receive letters advising that a reader's copy of the *Bandwagon* has been lost in the mail, and to please send a second copy.

Each issue is mailed around the end of the second month of issue date. In other words the January-February issue is mailed around the end of February.

The postal code calls for Second Class mail to be delivered to all postal zones within ten days, however we have not found this to be the case. It sometimes requires as long as three weeks for delivery.

So you are again asked, allow a few weeks before writing,

New CHS Directory Available

Johann Dahlinger, wife of member Fred Dahlinger, has kindly compiled a new directory. To obtain a copy please fill out the card found elsewhere in this issue. Copies are free, and will be sent immediately upon receipt of the card. It is hoped that postal expense, the major cost in producing a directory, will be less by distributing it in this manner rather than by a mass mailing. Directories will be sent only to members requesting one, so fill out your card as soon as possible.



MERLE EVANS HONORED

Merle Evans was presented an honorary membership in the Circus Historical Society on January 30, 1984. The presentation was made by CHS Secretary-Treasurer Edward L. Jones during the concert of the Windjammers Unlimited conducted by Evans in Sarasota, Florida. The concert was in celebration of Evans' 91st birthday, with a special performance of the Sarasota Sailor Circus.

John Herriott, ringmaster, Merle Evans, and Ed Jones, making the presentation, are shown. Photo by Cliff Glotzbach.

Dues Notices

The dues notices will be sent soon. Members should note that the form includes the opportunity to pay a \$25, or \$50 membership fee on a voluntary basis. Last year fifty-one members paid \$25, and twelve \$50. Because of their generosity, almost \$900 extra was added to the CHS treasury. This not only made it unnecessary to raise the dues, but also helped pay for an increased number of pages in *Bandwagon*. The editor reports that the backlog of articles and features is sufficient to continue with larger issues as long

as it is financially feasible. Those members who are able to do so are encouraged to make a contribution to help continue publishing articles which are "well documented and well illustrated, researched in the typical, admirable and exhaustive style familiar to readers of *Bandwagon*," as the *World's Fair*, the *English Amusement Business*, noted in its January 21, 1984 issue.

AVAILABLE BACK ISSUES OF BANDWAGON

1966, all but Mar.-Apr., July-Aug., Nov.-Dec.

1967, all but Jan.-Feb., May-June

1968, all issues available

1969, all but Mar.-Apr., May-June, Nov.-Dec.

1970, all but Sept.-Oct.

1971, all but May-June

1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, all available

1977, all but March-Apr.

1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, all available.

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In Loving Memory of My Beloved Brother JOHN WILLIAM ROACH

Born; Durham, N.C., July 25, 1917

Died; Cataula, Georgia, February 25, 1984

Victim of a heart attack. He was the son of Jack and Anna Roach, vaudevillians, who became a musician. He owned and operated a tent show in the Southeast for many years. He had a chimp act for five years, then, he ran an arcade, food stands and kid rides in later years, seven of them on the Key City Shows. During the fifties, to help out, he acted as boss canvasman on Hoxie Brothers Circus.

He was a veteran of World War Two and is survived by his wife, Hellon, one son J.W. Roach II, daughter-in-law Dorothy Roach, grandson J.W. Roach III, a daughter, Nola Roach, all of Cataula, Georgia; a step-mother, Mary Roach, a step-brother John Martin, a half-brother Charles F. Roach, a sister, Mrs. Sellars, all of Virginia, and another sister, of Tarpon Springs, Florida, Mrs. Robert M. Noell.

With Love,
Mae Noell, Tarpon Springs, Fla.

The Al G. Barnes' Big Four-Ring Wild Animal Circus

Seasons of 1919 and 1920

By Chang Reynolds

1919 Season

With the global conflict at an end with the signing of the Armistice, the peoples of the world looked forward to a more normal pace of living in the coming years. The actual peace treaty was not handed to the Central Powers until 7 May 1919 and not signed until 28 June of that year. In spite of the delay, the citizens of America made a rather rapid return to peacetime activities that were spiced with the return of loved ones from France. A somber note was added as the countless wounded disembarked at eastern ports and were moved to various hospitals for long weeks of rest and recuperation.

In the amusement world, circuses and carnivals made great efforts to attain the glory of pre-war years. Hopes were high for easier touring schedules and greater business. Probably the biggest change that took place in the circus world was the combination of the Ringling Bros. Circus and the Barnum & Bailey Circus into one unit. However, other traveling shows made plans that would expand the size of their operation and extend their routes into more favorable territory.

The Al G. Barnes' Trained Wild Animal Circus trumpeted from Venice, California, that much more money was being spent and more elaborate trimmings and glorified productions were being made "to send out a splendid piece of show property" that would be equal to that of all other shows and superior to most. This same line of publicity was being used by many other circuses to announce the first peace-time touring season.

"Never has so much money been spent on renewing and refurbishing the show," the Barnes' announcement in the *Billboard* stated. It continued as follows: "Superintendent R.S. Bigsby has had a crew busy all winter and a generous amount of real goldleaf has been judiciously used; many-hued wagons, newly painted utility wagons and every car from the advertising cars to the last flat have been overhauled and painted. The wardrobe department is turning out some very beautiful costumes and the new opening Pageant will be so 'yamped' up the audiences will think Theda Bara is due to make her debut in the circus arena."

Some staff members, mostly those



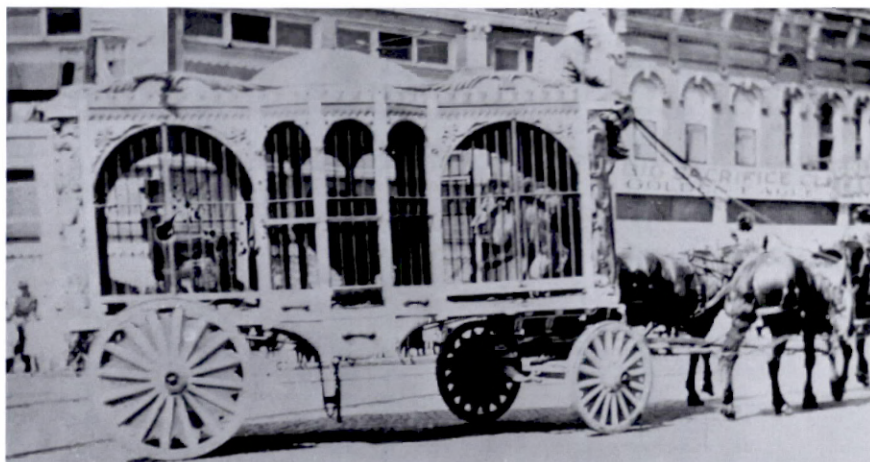
Al G. Barnes clown bandwagon in parade about 1920. This was the Gollmar Bros.-Patterson two tiered tableau which Barnes purchased from James Patterson during the 1919 season. Chet Slusser Collection.

"Dusty" Rhodes, 24-hour man; W.M. Thompson, Trainmaster; George Davis, steward; and Harry Clark, candy stands.

Alfred Wolfe was slated to do the auditing and disbursements as in the

that had led this circus to a series of prosperous seasons, were announced in this article on 15 February. Those mentioned were: Assistant Manager Al Sands; Traffic Manager W.K. Peck; Murray Pennock, General Agent; W.J. Erickson, Manager of Advertising Car No. 1; Frank Cassidy, Contracting Agent; Frank D. Garrigus, Manager of Advertising Car No. 2; Emma C. Miller, General Press Representative;

Al G. Barnes bay window lion cage in parade at Beloit, Wis. This cage was formerly on the Great Wallace Show and was purchased by Barnes about 1914. This photo, along with others here, taken at Beloit is from the collection of the late Charles Kitto. He was of the opinion it was taken in 1919 but routes for that season do not list the city. In all probability it was taken at Beloit, Aug. 12, 1918. Charles Kitto Collection.





Al G. Barnes also purchased the Gollmar-Bros.-Patterson Three Diamond Mirror tableau from James Patterson during the 1919 season. The wagon is shown here at Jimmy Woods' place at Venice, Calif. in 1946. It had been used for movie rentals for many years after its retirement by the Barnes show. Photo by Richard E. Conover.

past. Mrs. Theresa Stonehouse returned as secretary and treasurer and Rex de Rosselli was to be the press agent back with the show. C.E. Childs would handle the front door; Bobby Fountain was to be in charge of the Side-Show and the Pit Shows; Bert Rickman was again the announcer and equestrian director; and "Cheerful" Gardner was hired to be manager of the menagerie.

The article closed by stating that "the roster of trainers, clowns, performers, etc., has not been completed as yet. However, among them will be Martha Florine, who will handle leopards and a mixed group; Mabel Stark, tigers; Vera Earle, prima donna; Marguerite Ricardo, pumas; Mrs. Batty, lions; Bob Thornton, horses and pigs; Sidney Rink, elephants; Austin and Lucy King, Bert Dennis, Mrs. McCarthy and Babe Peterson. Others who will resume their old positions are Grace Marvel and "Doc" and Mrs. Weber. Two cars of horses, three sacred cattle, zebras, llamas and two lions have recently arrived."

A large want advertisement appeared in *Billboard* later in the month. It requested: "MUSICIANS WANTED —AL G. BARNES' BIG 4-RING WILD ANIMAL CIRCUS-Calliope players for two air calliopes, one steam. Musicians on all instruments keep in correspondence with me. CAN PLACE a few more good men now. Band 30 pieces. Season nine months. Opening early in March. We open and close in California. From sunshine to sunshine and always in sunshine. Booze fighters apply after July 1; others, anytime. Low pitch. No tickets. Write or wire. Edward A. Woeckener, Musical

Director, Box No. 11, Venice, California."

The above message speaks for itself, although it is not known why "booze fighters" were not wanted until after the first of July. Woeckner also stretched things a bit in his reference to "always in sunshine."

Although the opening date was listed as Santa Monica on 15 March in the first announcement, the show did not get underway at that stand until the 20th. It followed this initial date with visits to Long Beach and San Pedro. The following Sunday it made the short haul to Anaheim, then to San Bernardino and back to Pasadena. The three-day stand in Los Angeles followed on March 27, 28 and 29.

The run over the mountains to Bakersfield was made in record time without the usual stop at Mojave or Lancaster. A steady string of dates through the San Joaquin Valley followed — most of them on the east side. The four-day stand in San Francisco was made April 20-23. From this engagement there appeared the usual review of the circus which included some interesting notes plus the complete program. It stated:

"The parade is not remarkable for its size, but it is clean, bright and interesting, being made up principally of open dens, pretty girl riders, well-painted cages, and new harness and trappings. There are four bands in the parade including the clown band.

"The show had four turnaways in the four days. Al G. Barnes created an unusual feature in the huge welcoming parade extended to the 363rd Infantry and the 347th Artillery by cleaning out one of the gold and white cages and installing "Powder River," the 363rd's mascot. This animal was a huge, black house cat with her four kittens. The cage was pulled by six elephants in tandem. It received tremendous applause along the parade route. This was not the regular circus parade but an effort to welcome the returning troops. The show also gave a special performance for the soldiers from Letterman Hospital.



The Three Diamond Mirror tableau purchased by Barnes in 1919 is shown here on the Adam Forepaugh & Sells Bros. Circus around 1907. At this time it had no skyboards but carried three benches on the top. Pfening Archives.

"A big feature is the new spectacle, ALICE IN JUNGLELAND. Alice (Martha Florine) is shown in the center arena as a little girl playing with her white Persian kitten. She falls asleep and begins to dream. A drop discloses the King of Jungleland (Joe Miller) in a grotesque costume while the assembly of the Fairies around the dreaming girl is the signal for the gathering of one of the most unique collections of wild animals, men and pretty girls ever seen in a circus.

"The entire top is filled with performers — the track, rings and arena jammed with horses, llamas, sacred cattle, elephants, ponies, dogs, bears, zebras, deer, camels, dancing girls and savages with exotic makeup. Bessie Harvey, as the Queen of Jungleland mounted on the largest elephant, sings with Edward Woeckener's band, and leads several choruses sung by the entire company."

James Morrow made the announcements instead of Bert Rickman, the usual announcer, and Bob Thornton was the Equestrian Director. This was a change from the earlier announcement. The deer mentioned above — two herds — were in charge of Mr. and Mrs. Bert Weldon. This was a new act for the Barnes's Show.

At the conclusion of this magnificent spectacle the program continued with:

Display 2: Ring 1-Military Ponies, Charles Berry; Arena-Five bears, Robert Thornton; Ring 3-Military Ponies, Austin King

Display 3: Track-Hind-leg Poinies, Austin King and Charles Berry

Display 4: Ring 1-Trained Sacred Cattle, Sidney Rink; Arena-Dancing in the lions' den (three lions), Cleo Weber; Ring 3-Trained Llamas, Eddie Thomas. At each end of the track were Monkey Acrobats on Trapeze, Joe



Miller and Bert Dennis in charge.

Display 5: Posing horses in both rings and arena. Ring 1-Austin King; Arena-Mrs. Doppler; Ring 3-Bert Dennis

Display 6: Clowns with Al Crooks and Kinko

Display 7: Ring 1-Riding dogs, Bert Dennis; Arena-Female Lion group, Charles Berry; Ring 3-Riding dogs, Joe Miller.

Display 8: Ring 1-Four spotted Arabian Liberty horses, Charles Berry; Arena-Trained Zebras, Austin King; Ring 3-Four Palomino Liberty horses, Bert Dennis

Display 9: Clown walk-around with Police Patron number

Display 10: Ring 1: Elephants, Sidney Rink; Arena-THE RIDING FOUR (leopard, bear, dog and monkey) on ponies, Bessie Harvey; Ring 3-Monkey Principal Act, Bert Dennis

Display 11: Clowns with elephant band

Display 12: Ring 1-Trained dogs, Austin King; Ring 3-Trained dogs, Robert Thornton

Display 13: Arena-Group of seven tigers, Mabel Stark; at the close Miss Stark wrestles "Rajah"

Display 14: Ring 1-High jumping dogs; Ring 2-High jumping dogs

Display 15: Track-High-diving dogs and monkeys

Display 16: Ring 1-Riding dogs, Bert Dennis; Arena-Riding hybrid, Marguerite Ricardo; Ring 3-Elephants and acrobatic girls

Display 17: Concert parade and announcement

Display 18: Ring 1-Trained pigs, Dutch Marco; Arena-Trained sea lions, Capt. Stonewall; Ring 3-Trained pigs, Robert Thornton

Display 19: Track-Football elephants

Display 20: Ring 1-Revolving tables with dogs and ponies; Ring 3-Revolving tables with dogs and ponies

Display 21: Arena-Lion riding an elephant, Charles Berry

Display 22: FORTY DANCING GIRLS AND FORTY DANCING HORSES. The usual menage number introduced the showing of gaited horses and a combination of girl

Al G. Barnes No. 1 band atop the Three Oval Mirror tableau in parade at Beloit, Wis., Aug. 12, 1918. Charles Kitto Collection.

ballet. (Displays 23, 24, and 25 were a continuation of Display 22)

Display 23: Dancing horse, "King George," Austin King

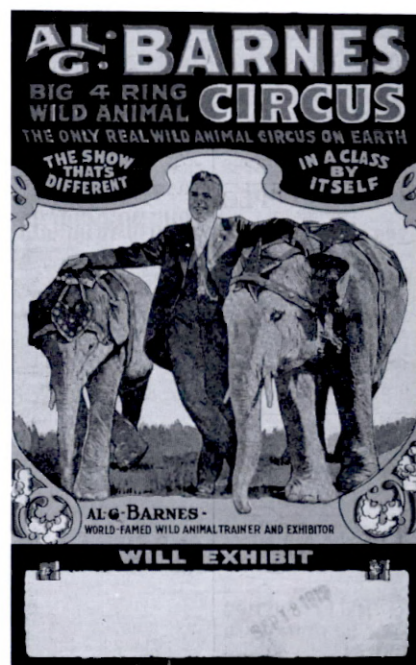
Display 24: High-jumping horses featuring "Sylvia," Bert Dennis

Display 25: Bessie Harvey on her white horse with white pigeons.

Display 26: Ring 1-Elephant and pony, Ova Ashworth; Arena-Polar bear group, Charles Berry; Ring 3-Elephant and pony, Mrs. Doppler

Display 27: Track-Elephants carrying ponies, Mrs. Doppler and Ova Ashworth. (When Don Francis saw this act the elephants would start at each end of the track carrying the ponies in a swing or sling. There would be a dog

This illustration appeared on the cover of the courier booklet used by the Al G. Barnes Circus in 1919. Pfening Archives.



doing a sit-up on each elephant's head.)

Display 28: Ring 1-Trained goats, Robert Thornton; Arena-Trained Alaskan deer, Mr. & Mrs. Bert Weldon; Ring 3-January act, Dutch Marco

Display 29: Track-Pegasus Number"-flying horse and dog wagon

Display 30: Ring 1-Camels, Sidney Rink; Wrestling bears, Charles Berry; Ring 3-Camels, Eddie Thomas

Display 31: Ring 1-Boxing kangaroo, Andy Anderson; Ring 3-War Elephants, Sidney Rink and Dolly Covey

Display 32: Ring 1-Aerial Pony, Sylvia Adair; Ring 3-Aerial Pony, Vera Adair

Display 33: Ring 1-Elephants, Sidney Rink; Arena-Three riding lions, Bob Thornton and Margaret Ricardo; Ring 3-Elephants, Eddie Thomas

Display 34: Track-Sidney Rink's hind-leg walking elephants

Display 35: Ring 1-Bucking mules and clowns; Ring 3-Bucking mules and clowns

Display 36: Arena-Twelve male African lions, Martha Florine

Display 37: Ring 1-Trained pony, Josephine Miller; Ring 3-Riding dogs, Bert Dennis

Display 38: Track-Pig and ostrich race around the track with the clowns

Display 39: CONQUEST OF NYANZA-Loose ostriches, kangaroos, camels, elephants, zebras, llamas, sacred cattle, horses and seven dogs circling the hippodrome track.

Display 40: Aerial lion and fireworks display, Mabel Stark

Display 41: UNCLE SAM-Austin King doing Roman standing driving on ten Palomino horses at full gallop around the track. A huge American flag streamer covered each side of the horses. (This was also known as the "Flag Team.")

Display 42: THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER-sung by everybody

CONCERT: Trick and fancy roping under the direction of Frank Bourhouse. McIntyre (black clown in white face) did boomerang throwing and there was a Hawaiian dancing number.

In contrast to this Barnes' program which included animals in every display except for a couple of clown numbers, one could glance at the program of the Sells Floto Circus for this same season. The Floto Show opened with an elaborate spec called THE BIRTH OF THE RAINBOW which was "a pageant of pomp, harmony and triumph, a super-allegorical pantomime ... with a cast of nearly one thousand people and 425 animals." The following displays included seven with animals (doves, horses, mules, ponies and dogs) — there were no acts with the big cats — and ten displays included only human performers. These consisted of revolving ladders, tra-peze, bar acts, wire, contortion, perch,

Roman rings, tumbling and acrobatic acts. The Sells Floto menagerie included eight elephants, six camels, one zebra and ten cages with eleven lions (male and female), four leopards, one zebu, three monkeys, two tigers and two ostriches.

The Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus at this time featured an almost equally divided program between animal and non-animal displays. The animal acts on the Hagenbeck show included Emil Schwyer and his lions, a riding lion, elephants, horses and ponies, dogs and a boxing kangaroo. All other displays were acrobats, wire acts, iron-jaw, hand balancing, trapeze and flying rings.

Within a year or two Barnes would advertise "Every act an animal act and every animal an actor," but this circus had always been framed in that fashion. The 1919 program was only a continuation of that same scenario.

At the conclusion of the San Francisco stand the Barnes' Show moved to Redwood City for one day and then returned to Oakland for a two-day stand. Dates in the bay area concluded the month of April and then the show picked up eleven stands in the northern part of California before entering Oregon at Klamath Falls on 12 May. This was only a single day stand and, after playing Montague in California, the circus returned to the big valley of Oregon for seven days. During this time Portland was a two-day stand on the 19th and 20th with tragic results for Bessie Harvey on the opening day. (She, of course, was Mrs. Charles Berry.)

This fine performer was thrown from her horse while making parade and after the fall was run over by the heavy wagon which followed close behind her. This accident resulted in a severely broken arm, which was later amputated in the hospital, and a badly fractured leg. In spite of these injuries she was to return to the show during this season and perform her duties as prima donna in a wheel chair.

At this time there were two announcements concerning the Barnes' Show in *Billboard*. On the 17th of May the paper carried a two-page advertisement featuring the performers. With a photo of "Cheerful" Gardner was the statement: "I am still handling wild animals." Also, there was an account of Captain Stonewall's skills with seals and sea lions. The sea lions performed an iron-jaw act. The Equestrienne Ballet of forty girls and forty horses was mentioned as "a big hit." In this display the trappings of the horses and the costumes of the girls were highly jeweled gold and silver rainments. The circus gave three shows in one day in Portland, Oregon, and the crowds were present for a

fourth if the circus performers could have given it.

The rest of May was spent in Washington with a three-day Seattle stand preceding the 2 June date at Vancouver, British Columbia. At this Canadian city four shows were given in one day. This was the only date in Canada and the circus returned to Washington to play eleven towns before entering Montana, at Missoula, on the 16th of June.

Nine Montana cities and six in North Dakota were made before the show entered Minnesota on the 2nd of July. On the 5th Al G. Barnes received a telegram that a large shipment of animals would soon arrive in San Francisco. Included in this cargo were ten lions, five elephants, four tigers, two orangutans, twenty monkeys, six leopards, and some other small animals and birds.

There must be some explanation for these frequent announcements regarding the shipment of animals that would eventually arrive on the Al G. Barnes' Circus. Regarding the elephants in particular and, also some of the other species, there is much confusion. It will be recalled by the reader that Bill Woodcock mentions four large, but not adult elephants, on the show in 1916. These four would be Ruth, Babe, Jewel and Pearl. This last animal has been named Babe on the M.L. Clark Circus. Since the Barnes' show already had one elephant with this name, she was called Pearl upon her arrival with Al G.'s outfit.

In addition to the above four pachyderms, Woodcock mentions (letter, 19 November 1960) that there were three little bulls with the show — giving a total of seven elephants in 1916. Woodcock wrote: "This would be before the bulls (Barney and Vance) were broken to pull the lion cross cage. When I was with the show (1920) I was told that

Al G. Barnes quarters at Phoenix, Ariz. fairgrounds, winter of 1919-20. In foreground is Ray Thompson on horseback. Note in back some of the show's baggage wagons. Gordon Jones Collection. Courtesy of Joe Rettinger.



the third member of the above trio had died. Don't know what sex or its name."

At some unknown date, probably at the end of the tour, the Barnes' Show purchased an elephant named Mable from Wm. P. Hall. This animal had traveled the back roads of the country with the Glasscock Shows before she was sold to the Howe's Great London Circus. She was with that show from 1911 through 1916 when she was sold to J. Augustus Jones. She remained one year on the Jones' show and then was with an outfit called Howard Bros. Circus with Joe Metcalf as trainer. Late in that year (1918) she was purchased by Wm. P. Hall from Jones' widow. In 1919 Mable was with the La Mont Circus and then returned to Hall at Lancaster. She was then sold to the Al G. Barnes' Circus and renamed Jennie. This fine elephant remained on the Barnes' show through its existence and then was absorbed into the Ringling-Barnum herd. The author has many photos of Jennie working in harness coupled to Barnes' Babe.

To continue the elephant saga—what happened to the five bulls which arrived in San Francisco in 1919? In 1920 when Bill Woodcock was with the Al G. Barnes' Circus he mentions seven elephants: Ruth, Jewel, Babe, Pearl, Barney, Vance and Jennie. Therefore, it can be assumed that the five punks had not been placed in the herd by the time of Woodcock's tenure. However, there is evidence that they (or other elephants of the same age) were on the show soon after — of which more later.

On the big holiday, 4 July, the Barnes' Circus played St. Cloud, Minnesota, and there was a turnaway of thousands of people at both shows that day. The circus then played Detroit and Brainard (both Minnesota stands) before the St. Cloud date. It then made a one-day date at St. Paul and two days in Minneapolis. Two new animals trainers joined the show at this last stand. They were Barney Kerker who was to work the big bear act and Fritz Brunner who was scheduled for a mixed group. The author

had the pleasure of working with Fritz during the 1930s at the Selig Zoo in Los Angeles. Unfortunately youth and a lack of perception regarding circus history prevented this writer from asking Mr. Brunner pertinent questions at that time. However, the aged trained did related some remarkable tales regarding his early days with Hagenbeck. At the time, at the Selig Zoo, Fritz had only one arm having lost the other because of an infected camel bite.

After the Minneapolis stand the Barnes' show made nineteen towns in Wisconsin concluding the tour on 30 July at Kenosha. During this period Al G. placed an order with the U.S. Tent and Awning Co. for a new menagerie top. At Waukesha, Wisconsin, rain descended in torrents but did not prevent the people from flocking to the show to witness the matinee and evening performance. At Racine, the next day, the brother of Al G. and his family were guests of the show. Al Pollock, a manufacturer in the town and a long-time friend of Barnes, gave his employees a half-day off and tickets to all the side-shows. A section of seats in the big top was reserved for these workers and three hundred and fifty employees had the time of their lives. After the night performance Barnes and his staff were entertained at the Pollock home.

In an article early in August *Billboard* reported the ever-increasing popularity of the Barnes' Circus and stated that the show was enjoying the biggest business in its history. The new addition of animals direct from the Straits Settlements made this, without a doubt, the greatest wild animals show on earth. It was mentioned that Margaret Ricardo had added "five fighting jungle-bred lions" to her group and that Mabel Stark had added "six more forest-bred tigers to her act, making a total of fifteen in all."

How much of the reporting from this circus is pure fiction is difficult to estimate but this writer assumes that a great deal of it was tongue in cheek — especially in regard to the addition of wild animals. Don Francis once stated that "if Barnes received all the wild animals that were reported in the news, he would have had to add many extra cages and several more cars during the season."

During the stands in the first Illinois towns numbers of well-known show folk swarmed to the show. Included among these were Mr. and Mrs. Fred Hutchinson, Edward Arlington and Col. Jake Sternad of vaudeville booking fame. "Happy" Adams, formerly with the Al G. Barnes' Circus had finally returned from France and was a welcome visitor. He had directed the first A.E.F. Circus which was produced in Bern Castle, Ger-

many, by the 90th Division. Mrs. Roy Thompson joined the show's personnel to perform her great riding act, a new feature in the Equestrienne Ballet.

The *Billboard* on 16 August carried this advertisement concerning these Barnes' Show needs: "AL G. BARNES' CIRCUS WANTS for the Big Spectacular Production "ALICE IN JUNGLELAND"—Fifty more chorus girls that can sing and dance. Highest salary paid. Long season. Write or wire as per *Billboard* route. Also want to buy one or two steel underframe cars, between sixty and seventy feet long. Must pass all M.C.B. inspection. Answer with full description as per *Billboard* route."



Al G. Barnes water wagon with clowns atop about 1920. Gordon Jones Collection. Courtesy of Joe Rettinger.

The reader will wonder why the show needed "fifty more chorus girls" at this time. The desire for steel railroad cars is more understandable.

Very cyclonic weather blasted the circus soon after it entered the state of Illinois. At Bloomington, on 6 August, a cyclone struck the show grounds in the afternoon but, owing to the excellent drills that the Barnes' management had established, everybody was ushered out of the tent in a few minutes and no one was hurt nor damage done to the equipment. Another storm hit the show at Cairo on the 13th and one tent was severely damaged. There was a great deal of destruction in the town. According to the *Billboard* article the show carried a second set of canvas and no dates were lost. A new calliope was received from Nichols Bros. sometime during the Illinois stands. Early in the Illinois tour Margaret Ricardo was stricken by appendicitis and rushed to a hospital. She was expected to resume her work within a few weeks. No mention was made of her replacement.

The Barnes' show was the first of

the season to play DeKalb, Illinois, on 4 August, and the result was two turn-aways. Dixon, the next day, drew a huge crowd for both performances and Lincoln, on the 7th, was another turnaway. At Decatur, on the 8th, the show played day and date with the World At Home Shows. Edward Shipp, of the Shipp & Feltus Circus which made South American tours in those days, was a guest of Mr. Barnes at Decatur. Ex-President William Howard Taft and family were guests at Pana, Illinois.

During the 1919 season the Barnes' Show played thirty very profitable dates in Illinois. Business was excellent and distinguished visitors were plentiful. Historians would have to agree that with the 1919 tour the Al G. Barnes' organization was at last coming of age. The long Illinois run was interrupted by two dates in Iowa on August 22 and 23 and ten dates in Indiana and Ohio from 2 September to the 13th of that month. Chicago was a three-day stand (30 August-1 September) and the show went to St. Louis, Missouri, for four days after its last Illinois stand on 17 September.

A report from Chicago in August indicated that the United States Tent and Awning Company was constructing a new big top for the Al G. Barnes' Circus. It would be delivered to the show while it was playing its three White City dates. This same company had repainted all the banner fronts on the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey side-show while it was playing its lake front stand. It was also making a complete outfit of canvas for the Shipp & Feltus Circus before it left for South America and it was also preparing new tents for the Con T. Kennedy Shows and Harry M. Hargreaves' Diving Show on the C.A. Wortham Carnival.

Early in September *Billboard* reported that Bessie Harvey had returned to the show from her hospital stay in Portland, Oregon. She was scheduled to resume her singing from a wheel chair at an early date. The same article also mentioned that the Barnes' Circus had, at that time, a herd of sixteen zebras traveling with the show. All of the names of these striped equines began with the letter "Z." In later years this idea of naming zebras with the last letter of the alphabet was dropped and as far as this writer can determine the total of sixteen zebras in 1919 was the all time high for this show. Usually the Barnes' show carried twelve or fourteen of the animals, plus hybrids.

This issue of *Billboard*, in an article dated from Chicago, reported that "Al G. Barnes, during his Indianapolis engagement, purchased James Patterson's big hippo which Mr. Patterson bought from Gollmar Bros." This was the famous Lotus who traveled

with the Al G. Barnes' Circus through the 1938 season and then was transferred to the Ringling-Barnum combination. She had been purchased as a two-and-a-half year old from Hagenbeck and arrived at the Baraboo quarters of the Gollmar Bros. Circus on 26 April 1903. She was sold with the Gollmar property to James Patterson at the conclusion of the 1916 season and was with the Patterson-Gollmar Show in 1917. She toured with Ringling-Barnum from 1939 until her death in the summer of 1954. According to Richard J. Reynolds, III, who had made an exhaustive study of zoo and circus hippopotami, Lotus made the longevity record for hippos in captivity.

Al G. Barnes also purchased four famous wagons from Patterson at this time — the former Gollmar Bros. Three Diamond Mirror tableau, the former Gollmar Bros. Two-tiered tableau (a rebuilt Forepaugh three tiered wagon), a seal den with a small, rectangular mirror in the center, and the cage which housed Lotus.



It should be mentioned to clear up the report from Chicago that the Barnes' Circus apparently did not play Indianapolis in 1919. However, it did play four stands in Indiana prior to its Cincinnati two-day date where the newspaper accounts first mention that Lotus was on the show. The four towns that were played were Crown Point, Logansport, Elwood and Richmond. Presumably the wagons and the hippo arrived on the show during those four days — 2 September through the 5th.

Before discussing the wagons from James Patterson, the writer must mention a rather well-known tableau purchased in 1912 which was neglected in earlier reports of this circus. (The error was due to a mix-up of dates in notes.) This tableau, the Swan and Fawn, was obtained by Al G. Barnes on one of his periodic visits to Baraboo mentioned in earlier articles of this series. It probably arrived at the same time as the cage with the

corner statues. The Swan and Fawn is shown mounted on a truck chassis in one of the photographs accompanying the 1916 article. The photo was taken at Laramie, Wyoming, by J.J. Ruff. Bill Woodcock is the source of the information regarding the purchase of this tableau in Baraboo.

To return to the Patterson purchase — the former Gollmar Bros. three-diamond mirror tableau was so-named by circus historians because of these three diamond shaped mirrors on each side. It also bore many elaborate carvings. It was used on Forepaugh-Sells in at least 1907, and was sold shortly thereafter to Gollmar. It was used by the Gollmar show through the 1916 season and then was on the James Patterson — Gollmar Bros. Combined Circus in 1917. It was used on the Barnes' show through the 1924 season.

The two-tiered tableau is probably the oldest parade wagon that Barnes ever purchased. It can be traced back through the *New York Clipper* to the time Adam Forepaugh imported two

ceased paradeing at the end of the 1924 season.

On 7-8 September the Al G. Barnes' Circus made a two-day stand in Cincinnati, Ohio. On the 7th the *Enquirer* carried a short article which stated, in part: "The Al G. Barnes' Big Four-Ring Wild Animal Circus is here. It arrived in the city at daybreak, traveling in two sections of 32 cars. There are 1200 wild and domestic animals, 550 horses and 600 people with the aggregation. (Exaggerated numbers, of course.) The big circus is strictly an animal show. It differs from the usual circus in many ways. Use is made of almost any animal from ordinary pigs to Royal Bengal tigers, lions and leopards, pumas, hyenas, camels, dogs and monkeys, riding and juggling seals and even zebras. Performing elephants and numerous clowns are there to amuse the little folk. There will be a street parade leaving the show grounds at 10 a.m."

The Barnes' show played the suburb of Cumminsville on 8 September and moved to Norwood for the 9th. Only one parade was given for the two dates. The *Commercial Tribune* of 7 September had a press release which consisted of an interview with Miss Emma C. Miller who was possibly the only female press agent of the time. Among other exaggerations, Miss Miller reported that "the show carried thirty lions, and that 'Sampson' does a 'Rickenbacker' (America's ace aviator of World War I) by flying around the top of the canvas in a plane accompanied by fireworks." This paper also stated on the 9th that Mrs. Bobby Fountain (Sunshine Jackson) had lost her pet fox and a new \$200 saxophone while in town.

The best article from Cincinnati was in the *Times Star* on the 9th of September. It was a full review of the show and is reported here in its entirety.

"Barnes' Circus Beats Ark — Here Are Educated Animals" "Beasts of the jungle, Fowls of the Air and Mammals of the Seas Perform with Amazing Skill — Reporter Believed to be Circus Proof, Calls It One of the Most Entertaining Circuses Ever in Cincinnati."

"One might have fancied that Noah's ark had sailed up the waters of Mill Creek and come to port on the Dreman Street shore in Cumminsville; that from the ancient craft there had disembarked all of the animal kingdom and the races of men. Right there you have Al G. Barnes' Wild Animal Circus, which was seen for the first time, Monday afternoon and night, on the Dreman Street grounds. Tuesday, the circus was prepared to set up its big tent in Norwood for a matinee and night showing.

"The modern and smooth faced Noah, who is Mr. Barnes himself, has Jack Londonized the modern circus,

Cage pulled by four elephant hitch in Al G. Barnes parade about 1920. Elephant trainer Sidney Rink is on horse at right. Photo by Charles Puck (Joe Bradbury Collection).

British parade wagons. In its original form this wagon was a three-tiered vehicle with four oval mirrors mounted in the lower deck. The wagon remained on the Forepaugh Show until its sale to the Ringling Bros. Circus in 1890. It was then rebuilt by the Moeller Bros. of Baraboo. In its new form the top deck was removed and heavier wheels with outside sunbursts were added. It remained on the Ringling Bros. Circus until about 1904, and was sent to the Forepaugh-Sells Show for the 1905 season. The wagon then appears on the Gollmar Circus. It remained on Gollmar through 1916 when it was sold, along with the rest of the show, to James Patterson. After its purchase by Barnes it was probably used in parades until the show



kicked out vaudeville and set up only that which is of red-bloodedness and highly satisfactory with a preface which is all beauty and music.

"Whoever expected to find real music in a circus? Barnes has accomplished it, and deserves his own niche in the show world. There is in the introductory wonder-play 'Alice in Jungleland,' a marching company of musicians equipped with the squealing horns of the Orient; the deeper voiced instruments of the Occident; China's pipes and the blacks of Africa beating the short and shallow drums presumed to be typical of the jungle marches of the Zambezi and the Congo. Each of the company is garbed accordingly and you never thrilled to 'Hindustan' as this mixed and accomplished gentry plays it. They lead a tremendous and fantastic procession, with the beautiful prima donna, Vera Earle, atop the skull of a gigantic elephant; more elephants following in a hurried shuffling gait; camels stepping gingerly for want of desert sand; horses prancing; educated hogs and llamas trotting along contentedly; lions, tigers, jaguars, bears of various sorts riding in state in cages with a tandem of brown bears drawing a wagon; trained geese in a waddling march and a sneaking hyena bringing up the rear.

"All this rushes past in a magnificent hurry. And it is only an introduction to picture the splendor of the vision that 'Alice in Jungleland' saw as she lay slumbering in the steel-girt center cage of wild beasts. 'Alice' sleeps through it all. And when she awakes —

"Right there is where the thrills begin in this new kind of circus. Through a heavily built chute leading from the menagerie into the big center cage rush in squads of wild animals,

Al G. Barnes is pictured with his hippo Lotus shortly after purchasing the animal from James Patterson in 1919. This photo was used on the 1920 Barnes show route cards. Pfening Archives.

where they are properly conquered by various dare-devil males and females of the human species. Meanwhile, in rings on either side, the gentler animals, such as the horses and camels, the hogs and the dogs and the geese and the like perform, and occasionally you are glad to give them full attention, especially at times when the blonde lady thrusts her curly head into a lion's jaws; and another equally good-looking lady wrestles with a huge Bengal tiger and a cowboy mixes up with a great bear.

"One of the scenes of beauty in this hurly-burly of jungle ferocity comes when Vera Earle, the prima donna, astride a beautiful horse, sings as her steed steps by. At the sound of her voice a score of doves and pouter-pigeons fly from some mysterious cote and alight upon her head, shoulders and arms. You will notice, in the forepart of the performance, a lady who wears a crimson kimona and sits in an invalid's chair. She is Bessie Harvey, once prima donna and trainer of pigeons and doves. Four months ago, in the introductory procession, in Portland, Oregon, she was thrown from her horse into the path of the lion wagon, her left arm was cut off and her lower limbs injured. It takes more than that to dash the courage of a circus woman.

"I am planning a new act," says the invalid. She is not to be kept out of the circus life, for despite her present infirmities, she is on hand to sing at each opening of the performance. One leaves the show with music humming in one's ears and memory pictures of

the show trooping through the mind, and pondering still the story which Press Agent Roselli related to the effect that the African warrior who wears spectacles is really a theological student; that the blood-sweating behemoth that lolls in a water cage and weights three tons, loves Al G. Barnes so that he follows that modern Noah like a puppy. And if you get past that side-show barker with his original declamation on Jo-Jo, and the Hawaiian dance-ahs and Ev-ah, the fat lady, you are a wonder of will power."

After leaving Cincinnati the show played two Ohio dates, two additional Indiana stands, and three Illinois towns before making its four-day stand in St. Louis on September 18-21. Two new elephants arrived while the show was making this extended stand and the new horse tents and troughs from the U.S. Tent and Awning Co. were also delivered. Other bits of information at this time were that Al G. had made a visit to Kansas City to purchase a new stateroom car and other equipment; that Bessie Harvey was drawing a great deal of comment while singing from the confines of her wheel chair; and, that Lotus and her trainer, Sam Ferguson, were a sensation of their walk around the hippodrome track.

From St. Louis, the show moved to St. Charles, where two baby polar bears arrived on the show, and then on through the state in which eight additional towns were played. On 2 October the circus entered Kansas where it made three stands, returned to Missouri to play Neosho, and then entered Arkansas for a tour of thirteen towns. At Lebanon, Missouri, on the 30th of September, the show had a turnaway despite opposition from a carnival. It was also reported that a new lighting system had been installed.

From Booneville, Arkansas, on 21 October the circus moved into Oklahoma for ten towns. Here the show encountered several days of rain. The circus lost some performances but made each town and drew well despite the weather. Some of the performers mentioned in the fall reports were Marguerite Strickland with an iron-jaw act; Gertrude Glenn, the dancing girl in the lion's cage who also danced in the opening spectacle. It was also reported that Al Sands had gone to San Francisco to arrange transportation for the acts that would ship to Honolulu at the close of the season.

The last want advertisement for the season appeared in *Billboard* on 1 November. It requested: "Good Harness Maker. Allen Suite, write. Would also like to hear from Blackie Williams, former Prop. Boss, Hagenbeck-Wallace Show."

The Al G. Barnes' Circus left Sayre, Oklahoma, after its performance there

on 1 November and moved into New Mexico for four stands; played its only date of the season in Texas at El Paso on the 7th; and then made two additional dates in New Mexico and six in Arizona before closing the season at Phoenix on 15 November.

The show went into winter quarters at the Arizona State Fairgrounds, located on 19th Avenue in Phoenix. This was the first time that any circus had wintered in that city. Joseph S. Rettinger has written a fine account of the Barnes' Circus winter stay in Phoenix and it was printed in *White Tops*, July-August 1969. Readers are referred to it for details of the stay in quarters for 1919-1920. Rettinger attributes the reason for abandoning the Venice, California, quarters as "trouble with his wife." Several other historians have also assumed this with some reason, principally since the final divorce from his wife was granted early in 1920. However, Don Francis, a very real expert on Barnes' affairs, believes that the city government officials of Venice, by changing zoning laws, forced Barnes out of his quarters at the pier. In fact, he believes that Barnes was informed of this as early as the St. Louis date in September when Venice officials visited the show. This author is inclined, after a study of the evidence, to agree with Francis. Perhaps both of the above reasons combined to assure the Barnes' show wintering in Phoenix.

At any rate it proved to be an exceedingly wet winter for the state of Arizona and the fairgrounds were flooded on several occasions. Joe Rettinger also states that a steel arena for the cat acts was erected under the grandstand while the elephants, and perhaps other stock, were housed in a brick building in the vicinity of the stands. It seems to have been a most unsuitable winter quarters situation.

1920 Season

While his circus was wintering in rain-soaked Phoenix, Al G. Barnes, accompanied by W.K. Peck, traffic manager, made a December visit to Chicago. They first went to Racine, Wisconsin, to attend the funeral of Mr. Barnes' brother, Andrew.

During the course of his Chicago visit, Barnes stated to the *Billboard* representative that a decree had been entered in the court of Judge Taft in Los Angeles which had granted Al G. an absolute divorce from Mrs. Barnes. The Judge also denied Mrs. Barnes' cross-bill which claimed separate maintenance. Al G. insisted that his former wife had no claim to any of his interests as a result of this decision.

Previous to this action there had been at least four divorce suits filed by these parties, all without result. The feud between Al G. and Dollie Barnes had gone on over many years and was

very bitter. Whether Mrs. Barnes was more incensed with Al G.'s affairs with other women or more eager to obtain what, to all appearances, was rapidly developing into prosperous show property will probably never be known. Most of the unhappy relationship between the two people were divulged in the courts and repeated in the newspapers of the time. The writer believes that they need not be repeated here, except to note that the circus owner was in all probability a much besieged man while his circus operation was developing into a highly successful business.

Of more importance, while on his Chicago visit, Barnes announced that he had purchased property between Los Angeles and Venice, and that he would erect a new and permanent winter quarters which would be finished in time to house the circus during the 1920-21 winter. This site, of course, was the show's famous quarters at Palms, California.

Early in January it was announced that Ed C. Wiley, who had finished the 1919 season as contracting agent with the Yankee Robinson Circus, had been hired to replace Frank A. Cassidy, the local contractor for the Barnes' show. Cassidy, a veteran theatre man, declared that he wanted to vacation in the summer instead of the winter. A "WANTED FOR THE AL G. BARNES' SIDE SHOWS" advertisement appeared in *Billboard*. It was placed by Bobby Fountain and stated: "Freaks and extraordinary Attractions, Colored Band and Minstrels, Gun Spinners, Sword Fighters, and Whirling Dervish. If you have something new, novel or strange, we want it. Nothing too large or too small. WANT Dancers and Ticket Sellers

Tandem horse hitch and cage wagon in 1920 Al G. Barnes street parade. Karl Knecht, prominent early day circus fan, took this photo presumably in his home town of Evansville, Ind., Aug. 5, 1920. Pfening Archives.



who can and will work. Longest season in the circus business. Open Feb. 28 and close about Dec. 15. State lowest in first letter. No time for correspondence. House under contract with me. Your contracts hold good, so report here Feb. 26. Candy, wire your new address here. Lentout write."

The call for the Al G. Barnes' Big 4-Ring Wild Animal Circus was in *Billboard* a month later. It was brief and to the point. "Opens in Phoenix, Arizona, Saturday, Feb. 28. All people engaged report in Phoenix, Arizona, for rehearsals not later than Feb. 23. Wanted — Working men in all departments. Remember you have the longest season here of any show on the road."

Meanwhile in Phoenix the show was drying out after continued rains which had left water as deep as three feet on the fairgrounds, according to Joe Rettinger's fine article, "Arizona Circus Memories," which appeared in *The White Tops*, July-August 1969. Rettinger also reports that early in February seven tigers, a cage of polar bears and an okapi were unloaded at the fairgrounds. The tigers and the polar bears may have been delivered but the okapi certainly not.

Although "discovered" from two strips of skin in 1901, the first okapi to be seen alive outside of the Congo River area arrived at the Zoological Gardens in Antwerp, Belgium on 8 August 1919. The first of the species to arrive in the United States at the New York Zoological Park came in August 1937. Okapis were about as numerous on the Barnes Circus as the constantly advertised giraffes with that show. In fact, an ex-Barnes' employee told this writer years ago that Al G. had a "hyney," an offspring of a zebra and a donkey, billed as an okapi. This may not have been too far off the mark since those strips of skin found in 1901 were at first thought to have come from some new species of zebra.

The show opened its 1920 tour at

Eastlake Park in Phoenix on 28 February. According to the Rettinger article the circus had been able to winter at the fairgrounds at no expense to the show. The only proviso demanded by the city officials was that the grounds should be cared for and cleaned when the show left on tour. Thus, while the show was on the lot for its opening performance, an official visited the quarters and to his dismay estimated that it would cost some \$2000 to clean and repair the place. Barnes refused to pay and the sheriff was sent to Mesa, the next stand, to attach the tent poles. Since the tent was already erected when he arrived, the officials asked the sheriff in Yuma, the fourth stand of the season, to hold the train. Barnes still would not pay the amount demanded, but a bond was written which later proved to be of no value. So the Barnes' Circus slipped into California and out of harm's way. It should be added that the state of Arizona did catch up with Al G. in the fall when the show toured Arizona and the amount was collected. Presumably Al G. was better able to pay the amount at the end of the year than he was on the opening days. (All readers are urged to read Joe Rettinger's story of this more or less hilarious event in the July-August 1969 issue of *White Tops*.)

The staff for 1920 was as follows: Al G. Barnes, manager; A.L. Sands, ass't. manager; J.W. Prinz, treasurer; Alfred E. Wolff, auditor; Murray A. Pennock, general agent; Wm. K. Peck, railroad contractor; E.B. Wiley, local contractor; Duke Mitchell, special agent; Fred Williams, contracting press agent; Tom Heeney, advance press agent; Rex de Rosselli, press agent with the show; E.C. Glines, excursion agent; Bobbie Fountain, manager side-show; Robert Thornton, equestrian director; Harry X. Clark,

supt. privileges; Ed Woeckener, musical director; Bert Rickman, supt. reserved seat tickets; W.J. Petterson, supt. canvas; Paul Barton, train master; Jack Hickey, boss hostler; E. Craft, supt. commissary dept.; Bill Sounders, supt. light; John West, supt. properties; Abe King, supt. ring stock; E. Snyder, supt. stock; E. Longyear, supt. working crew; Dusty Rhodes, 24-hour agent; Cheerful Gardner, supt. elephants and animals; James Babcock, boss carpenter; John Baird, blacksmith; W.J. Erickson, manager of advance car No. 1; Frank D. Gerrigus, manager of advance car No. 2; F. Piper, checker-up; C.S. Giles, Legal Adjuster; and Charles Boulware, announcer.

Readers will note that among other staff changes Sidney Rink had left the show after six years as superintendent of elephants. It will also be recalled that Tim Buckley was in charge of the three elephants, Ruth, Babe and Jewel in 1911 and that Bill Emery was superintendent in 1912. Sidney Rink followed Emery and under his direction the show's herd increased by the additional four animals which Gardner inherited in 1920. They were Palm, Barney, Vance and the newly purchased Jenny. Although additional young elephants had been reported as joining the show, their identity has so far never been discovered. Of course, Bob Thornton took care of Ruth, Babe and Jewel before Buckley arrived on the scene.

After leaving Yuma the show played three stands in California's Imperial Valley, and then made the San Diego date on 8 March. After that successful stand, it moved through southern California towns as far up the coast as Santa Paula before returning to Pasadena which preceded the four-day stand in Los Angeles.

Since the Pasadena newspapers carried extensive advertising for the show a review of these will be presented. In all probability the same material was used throughout the

season in all the towns that were played. One five paragraph column was devoted to the comparison of American circus clowns with the Frenchman Peirot of 1262. It ended with the claim that the Barnes' Show had forty clowns, "each a top-notch, kingpin, top-of-the-ladder, dyed-in-the-wool funmaker."

Another article, equally as long, was devoted to the Mounted Ballet — "40 mounted singing queens to be seen only on the Al G. Barnes' Circus." Still another piece described the "25 block long parade; Lotus, the Pearl of the Nyanza, the 6-ton hippopotamus only recently captured in Africa; an immense steel arena encircling thirty ferocious blood-loving lions subjugated by the incomparable Captain Ricardo; 600 people and 550 horses; and every animal an actor and every act an animal act."

The Barnes' Circus played Pasadena on 16 March and on 15 November in 1920. On both occasions it used the lot at Carmelita Park which was located at Orange Grove Avenue and Colorado Street near the Arroyo Seco.

In Los Angeles business broke all past records and the four-day stand gave the show capacity houses and five turnaways. The report to *Billboard* by Rex de Rosselli continues: "Alice in Jungleland is the spectacle for the season. Rewritten and produced under the watchful eye of the 'Governor' this year's offering surpasses all others in matchless beauty and splendor. Martha Florine is Little Alice while Bessie Harvey is again the prima donna, assisted by Miss Le Claire and Mr. Messereau. A ballet of forty girls interpret the dance of the jungle."

One of the former John Robinson Ten Big Shows cottage style dens on the Al G. Barnes lot around 1920. This is one of the three former Robinson cages purchased by Barnes from B.E. Wallace during the 1920 season. Photo by Charles Puck (Joe Bradbury Collection).

Al G. Barnes bear cage about 1920. Photo by Charles Puck (Joe Bradbury Collection).



Bill Woodcock wrote: "There were three howdah bull with three singers in 1920 when I was with the show." (Woodcock joined at Clinton, Illinois, on 28 July.) This letter continues in reference to a fairly well-known photograph: "I would say that Bess Harvey shows on the lead bull on left of the photo, mounted on Jewel, and a woman named Messereau (Le Claire), next on Ruth. This would leave the Messereau woman's husband mounted on Babe, and not showing in the photo. Two bulls without howdahs should be Pearl and Jenny, and there were blankets on both, although one shows here without a blanket."

Rosselli's account continued: "Austin King, producing clown, assisted by twenty fun-makers, offers new ideas in clown alley. Bones Hartzell is a new member. Kinko, Bert Leo, Al Crooks, Bill Tate, Marco and Cotton are also there." (Note: this Austin King is not the animal trainer by the same name.)

The press agent's report detailed some of the performers and concluded with a description of Bobby Fountain's side-show displays. Singled out for emphasis in the big show were Charles Berry, Allen Hauser, Joe Miller and Captain Ricardo with his twenty lions. (The number jungle felines was ten less animals than in the advertising.) Also mentioned were Curley Phillips with an excellent pig act; Grace Marvel, Mabel Gardner, Nita Buchanan and Cheerful Gardner. It was stated that Martha Florine had added five more lions to her group and that Mabel Stark was presenting twelve tigers in her act.

Bobby Fountain managed the two side-shows with John Foyler, his assistant for the No. 2 show. In the No. 1 side-show were Paul Des Muke, armless wonder; Wattie, the Arizona giant; Flosso, boy wonder and inside lecturer; Sunshine (Mrs. Bobby Fountain); Carson and Campbell, battle axe and knife throwers who were also expert rifle shots; Prince Small, little man; Carmelita, long-haired lady; Skinney, skeleton dude; Elizabeth Truck's albino Georgia minstrels; a fifteen piece band and a congress of dancing girls.

The No. 2 show featured Grace Gilbert, freak, Mabel with a den of reptiles; Prince Wahaw, Australian boomerang thrower; Col. Ludwig, Coco and Cocoita, monkey man and woman; Pino, human pin cushion; and Princess Mabel with her birds.

In concluding his article Rosselli mentioned that George Davis, who had the cookhouse on the Barnes' show for many years, had been advanced to the position of superintendent of the entire show.

With the conclusion of the Los Angeles stand the Barnes' Circus used the next day to make the long haul over the desert and mountains to



The second of the John Robinson cages coming to Barnes in 1920 is shown in a c.1903 photo on the John Robinson Circus. Pfening Archives.

Bakersfield. Twenty-four San Joaquin Valley and coastal dates were played before the show arrived in San Francisco for its four days of performances, April 15 through 18. During this run of nearly a month the circus had encountered heavy rain and railroad strikes but managed to move the train on time and not miss a date. Probably the most significant event of this month was the marriage of Verne Venable to Allen Hauser at the old mission in San Rafael.

The usual extensive report from San Francisco was prepared for the *Billboard* by William J. Hilliar. He re-

The third John Robinson cage coming to Barnes in 1920 is shown here in a 1925 photo on the Barnes lot. Toby Tyler photo from Pfening Archives.



ported that on Sunday afternoon two complete performances had to be given because of the enormous crowd. He also stated that the tent was crowded at every performance during the entire engagement. The reporter also singled out the same performers who had been mentioned earlier by Rosselli for special praise. He described the spec, "Alice in Jungleland" in glowing terms with special emphasis on Martha Florine, Bessie Harvey, Lottie Le Claire and E.F. Mesereau. Others who received special mention were Balamida, featured dancer; Bernice Brown, Nita Buchanan, Marguerite Strickler, equestriennes; and Mabel Gardner, wild animal trainer.

In the menagerie department he emphasized Lotus; the elephants under the direction of Cheerful Gardner and "High Pockets" Baudendistel; and Eddie Trees, the menagerie assistant to Gardner. The music of the band directed by Edward A. Woeckener was also emphasized.

The performance in San Francisco was as follows:

Display 1: Alice in Wonderland, with Martha Florine

Display 2: Lotus, the hippopotamus, walking the track

Display 3: Ring 1-Arabian stallion and ponies, Allen Hauser; Arena-Pumas, Captain Ricardo; Ring 3-Educated ponies, Charles Berry

Display 4: "Denver" and "Tiny," holders of the hind-leg record for ponies

Display 5: Ring 1-Elephants, Cheerful Gardner; Arena-Mixed group of bears, Robert Thornton; Ring 3-Elephants, "High Pockets" Baudendistel

Display 6: Clown Giraffe

Display 7: Ring 1-Wrestling bear; Arena-Mabel Stark, with the only wrestling tiger in the world; Ring 3-Wrestling bear

Display 8: "The Act Beautiful," Mack Miller

Display 9: Austin King's "Cleopatra," a clown number

Display 10: Ring 1-South American llamas; Arena-Dot Whitney dancing in the lion's den; Ring 3-Camels

Display 11: Cheerful Gardner presenting the fastest herd of performing elephants in the world

Display 12: Ring 1-Liberty horses, Ova Ashworth; Arena-The Riding Four, Pearl Hamilton; Ring 3-Liberty horses, Allen Hauser

Display 13: 1776—Elephants—1776

Display 14: Posing horses in all rings with Margie Marlow, Verne La Venable, and Frank Poe

Display 15: Original circus prima donna, Bessie Harvey, dove song

Display 16: Ring 1-Riding mandrill; Arena-Riding hybrid, Mabel Gardner; Ring 3-Jump up dogs

Display 17: Concert Announcement-Black Musicians and Hawaiian Girls

Display 18: Ring 1-Performing dogs, Robert Thornton; Arena-Siberian Polar Bears, Roy Stevens; Ring 3-Performing dogs

Display 19: High-diving dogs and monkeys

Display 20: Revolving tables

Display 21: Ring 1-The only troupe of performing zebras in the world, Joe Miller; Arena-Three lions, La Verne Venable; Ring 3-Goats, Dutch Marco

Display 22: Bucking mules

Display 23: Big elephant act in the rings and in the arena Mabel Stark's big act with 20 tigers.

Display 24: Menage with 40 dancing girls and 40 dancing horses

Display 25: Ring 1-Performing pigs, Dutch Marco; Arena-Seals, McDonald; Ring 3-Performing pigs, Curley Phillips

Display 26: Only lion riding an elephant in the world

Display 27: Wild West

Display 28: Ring 1-Dogs and ponies; Arena-Mixed group of 12 lions, Captain Ricardo; Ring 3-Goodnight ponies, Mat Miller

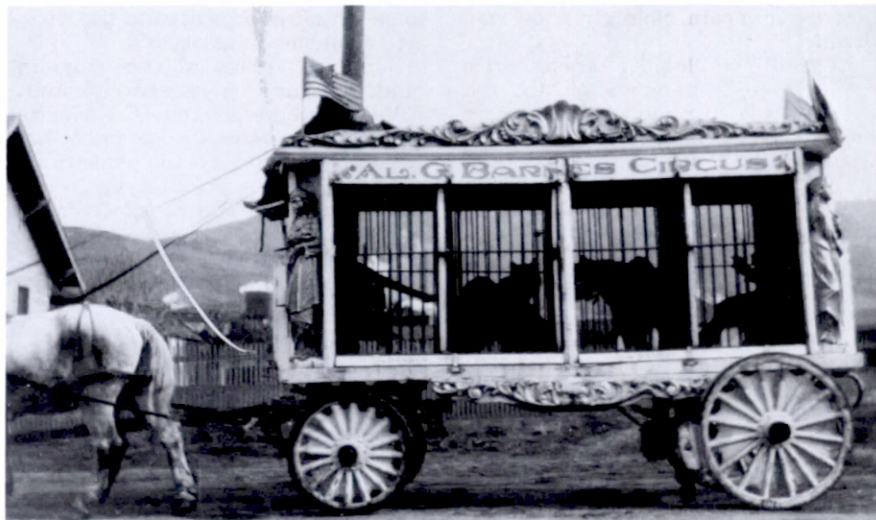
Display 29: The Animal Hunt of Nyanza

Display 30: Aerial pony and world's only aerial lion, Mabel Stark

Display 31: Yankee Doodle Flag Team

From San Francisco the circus moved around the bay to Oakland for a two-day stand and then to Sacramento and six towns to the north. Of these, Chico and Marysville had turn-away houses. Only one performance was given at Roseville, but the tent was packed by reservation Indians. On 29 April the show rolled to Reno in the usual snow storm and blizzard as it crossed the Sierra Nevada mountains. However, the weather was fine and the attendance good at that Nevada town.

Early in May the following appeared in the *Billboard*: "WANTED FOR AL G. BARNES' CIRCUS - Local Contrac-



Al G. Barnes cage in parade about 1920. This former Forepaugh-Sells wagon was purchased by Barnes at Baraboo, Wis. in 1912. Chet Slusser Collection.

tor. Owing to the prolonged illness of Ed P. Wiley I want Local Contractor. Will still get thirty weeks' work. Only recognized Agents of proven ability need apply. Do not write. Wire."

After adding Winnemucca and Elko in Nevada, the show entered Utah for dates at Salt Lake City, Ogden and Logan. It was reported from the show at this time that Daniel Williams had taken charge of the seal act since Capt. Stonewall had retired for the season. (It will be noted from the program above that a man named McDonald had been working this act.) Roy Stevens was now working the big bear act of eighteen animals as well as the polar bear act and Ricardo had added five more lions to his act making a total of twenty-two cats. (That is ten more than the reviewer at San Francisco gave him credit for.) Other news notes includes: Ova Ashworth was riding again after her recent accident; Joe and Lilly Lowery were newcomers to Fountain's No. 1 side-show; Elmer Lingo was the new trainmaster. He replaced Paul Barton. Another hospitalized performer in the early weeks of the season was Ruth Cohn who had suffered from appendicitis. She married Al Wolff, the auditor, when the show reached Portland, Oregon.

Following the Utah stands, the Barnes' Circus went into Idaho to play six towns and then entered Oregon at La Grande. Two days later, at Pendleton, the Great Alamo Shows' sleepers and the Al G. Barnes' train were side by side in the yards. Visits were exchanged by the people of both outfits. Manager Waugh, of the Alamo Shows, had a large carnival with seven big rides and twenty shows. One of the features was Sky Clark's Overseas Boy's War Exhibit. It had a 20-

foot wagon front painted with scenes of the recently concluded conflict. The war relics were displayed inside a new 40 x 70 khaki tent. Happy de Rosselli, son of the Barnes' press agent, was manager of this show and this was the first time the two had met since the end of the war. The son had recently been awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for heroism in action in France.

At this time, during the Oregon tour, Bert Rickman replaced Charles Boulware as announcer. The latter had left the show for the Eastern fairs. Martha Florine was injured when her horse stumbled and fell on her. In Portland Al G. invited the nurses from the Good Samaritan Hospital to a performance as his guests in honor of Bessie Harvey. It will be recalled that Miss Harvey convalesced there in 1919 while recovering from her severe accident. Portland was played for two days, May 17-18, with three shows each day.

On 19 May the Barnes' show began a ten-day tour through Washington which included a three-day stand in Seattle. From that city the circus moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, for a one-day stand which included four performances. Rosselli reported that this was the third year that this circus "had stood them up to four turnaways" in Vancouver. After returning to Washington for five dates the show returned to Canada for a long run. Cranbrook, B.C., 7 June, was the first date and it was made in a snow storm and high wind which prevented the erection of the big top. However, according to reports, the crowd arrived on the lot and possibly the performance was side-walled.

At Fernie, B.C., on 8 June everything was blown down soon after the entire canvas was erected. The management side-walled the afternoon performance and it was given in a

downpour of rain. No night show was given.

At Medicine Hat the circus had a house full of Indians and at McCleod there was a turnaway, after a long haul and on a bad lot. At Calgary there was wonderful business. Al G. Barnes invited the wounded war veterans to the night performance as his guests. Three performances were given in the single day at Edmonton; the two night shows were completed in rain and mud. Bobby Fountain's two side-shows were packed as he accommodated the waiting throngs. Curley Phillips, a trainer who had been injured in San Francisco, returned to the show at this time. Wm. Peck, who had been managing the show in the absence of Al Sands, left for the East. The Canadians welcomed Ova Ashworth and Bob Thornton, who were both Canadians by birth.

After Calgary, the Barnes' Circus played the large towns of Edmonton, Saskatoon, and Regina, as well as three smaller sites. The show made Swift Current on 21 June and did very good business. The next day, at Moose Jaw, there was excellent business despite a late arrival and a bad lot. Weyburn provided a fair matinee and a good night house. Estevan was good for one show only — the matinee. At Brandon, Manitoba, there was a good lot and wonderful business. The John Robinson Circus was playing this area and nearly day and dated the Al G. Barnes' Circus at this town. Some of the Barnes' people had visited the Robinson show at Winnipeg while the former circus was in Swift Current.

On 26 June at Winnipeg the show was in early and up and ready for a big day. The parade went out on time and the crowds began to gather on the lot before the show was ready for them. The result was an afternoon perform-

ance which was packed to the doors and a turnaway at night.

Personnel notes at this time included: Skinny Dawson had become a full-fledged press agent; C.I. Norris, of Norris & Rowe Circus fame, had been signed to work his sensational baboon act; and Vera Earle, former prima donna of the Barnes' Circus, was a visitor at Winnipeg. She was working with a movie company which was shooting some footage in the vicinity.

Winnipeg was the last date of the successful Canadian tour and following it the circus moved to North Dakota for two stands at Grand Forks and Fargo before it entered Minnesota. At Grand Forks, where the weather was ideal and business good, the Barnes' show was two days behind the John Robinson Circus. Fargo was a turnaway in spite of threatening rain.

Fergus Falls, the first Minnesota date, was made after a 143-mile run. There was a late arrival and a delayed afternoon performance but good crowds. St. Cloud, the following day, furnished strong wind and rain. The storm blew over and there was a well-filled tent for the matinee and night shows. Minneapolis, the third stand in the state, was a two-day affair on 2-3 July. The first day was fine but it rained all day on the third and there were only two fair houses.

The Fourth of July was an off day (Sunday), but on the 5th the show played St. Paul to excellent business for three performances. The citizens of that city began to gather on the lot at noon and soon there were thousands on the show grounds. Police were called to control the crowd but they moved past all barricades and finally the management of the circus announced that three performances would be given. This quieted the crowd and they sat on the ground waiting for the second performance which started at 4:30 p.m. Rosselli reported that the Al G. Barnes' Circus was the only show that ever gave three perform-

ances in one day at Winnipeg and St. Paul.

A report from Red Bluff, California, appeared in the *Billboard* at this time. It stated that the Board of Trade at that city appeared before the Supervisors and requested the return to the Al G. Barnes' Circus of the \$100 that it had paid in tax in April when it showed in that city. The reason for this request was that the city had been on a black list of circuses for many years and that it had been only recently that this form of amusement had consented to play the town. The ordinance taxing circuses had been enacted in 1894 and the only show that had ever paid the tax was the Barnes' Circus when it appeared in the town in 1920. The District Attorney declared that the tax had been levied legally and could not be returned. However, it was decided that it would be paid to the circus by some civic organization.

After the Red Wing, Minnesota date, the Barnes' show played three towns in Wisconsin and then entered Michigan for eight dates. At Muskegon two camels engaged in a fight during the parade, the result of which was that one of them died on the street of that city. Several of the circus attendants were injured while trying to break up the encounter between the beasts.

Reports from the show stated that there were two good houses in Red Wing despite rain and the location of the lot which was a mile and one-half outside the city limits. The next day at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, was a fine day with some rain in the morning. It cleared by the time the afternoon performance was started and good business was present on a good lot with an easy haul. There were two packed houses at Rice Lake, Wisconsin, the following day.

At Ashland, Wisconsin, there was a

Horse drawn spec cart on Al G. Barnes lot, Evansville, Indiana, Aug. 5, 1920. Photo by Karl Knecht (Pfening Archives).





Three panel painting tableau with No. 2 band in Al G. Barnes parade at Memphis, Tenn., Aug. 9, 1920. Photo by Ralph Miller (Joe Bradbury Collection).

long haul to a very bad lot. Business, however, was good. A shipment of animals arrived here which added three Siberian tigers to Mabel Stark's group and several monkeys and tropical birds to the menagerie. This concluded the stands in Wisconsin and the show moved to Ironwood, Michigan, for fair business in this small town. On the 11th of July the circus made a 368-mile run to St. Ignace, Michigan, for one performance on the 12th.

The next day at Petoskey, Michigan, there were two turnaways in spite of a bad lot which was reached after a long haul from the railroad yards. The show then moved some 93 miles to Cadillac where there was great business. Traverse City also brought in good business on a bad lot and a long haul. Manistee, after a 70-mile run, had good business. Ludington provided a good matinee and night house. Muskegon was the next Michigan date and the show finished up in that state by giving three performances, each to capacity houses, at Grand Rapids. This was a one-day stand.

Elkhart, Indiana, furnished a bad lot after a long haul, but there were two good houses. There was also great business at Kankakee and Streator, Illinois. At Pontiac, Ill., the next day, the show encountered rain and a long haul to a very poor lot. The parade was late getting downtown but the tent was packed for the afternoon show and there was a turnaway at night. At Bloomington on Sunday the lot was at Lake Park and the elephants and Lotus sported in the water to the amusement of hundreds of by-standers. Some trouble arose when the big hippo refused to leave the lake and lingered in it for hours. The attendance next day at the two performances was excellent. There were turn-

aways at Champaign and the delayed run to Clinton caused a late parade.

News concerning the performers in early July indicated that Grace Marvel was riding menage and working a puma act. C.I. Norris and his baboons were a popular feature and a new big top, menagerie and side-show tents had been ordered. Eddie Trees was breaking a mixed group which would be added to the performance, and Al G. Barnes had purchased two giraffes and two baby elephants for early delivery.

It was at Clinton, Illinois, on 28 July, that Bill Woodcock joined the elephant department under Cheerful Gardner. In an answer to a Bob Bernard question regarding the driver of the cage wagon pulled by Barney and Vance, Woodcock had this to say:

"No, that isn't me on the cage driving Barney and Vance. You see, I was brand new, age 16 at that time. I was only a helper on above, and rode beside the driver when the cage was enroute from the train to the lot and back at night. The two drivers at different times while I was with the show were Tom Bevins, and a tall man with a sandy mustache named Ocey Cook. When I first joined the show; in spec, I rode on either Jenny or Pearl. Both had a man on her head at that time. I rode Babe in parade. But soon after I joined, Highpockets left, also Ocey Cook, and I had to lead a houdah bull in spec. Babe it was, and Gardner gave me no end of hell daily. You see, the three houdah bulls had several moves to make in the spec. Turn this way and that; crouch down on their bellies, etc. Gardner worked Jewel but always saw everything else that went on. Nobody ever worked bulls exactly to please him."

Joe Bradbury discussed the 1920 Al G. Barnes' Circus with Bill Woodcock on several occasions and some of the details of the season that were reported follow direct from Woodcock's letters:

"In the 1920 street parade the No. 1 band was on the white tableau with the oval mirror in the center (Barnes' first large parade type wagon.) The No. 2 band rode a tableau with painted panels on the sides, and the clown band was on the old Gollmar two decker (former Forepaugh) wagon which carried wardrobe and was drawn in parade by ten light-weight, spotted horses which was also the flag team that closed the performance. The Swan and Fawn tableau, painted blue and silver, which had come from Baraboo, carried trained domestic stock, hogs, goats, geese, etc. A bunch of blacks dressed up like Zulus rode it in the parade.

"When I got there the show had one steam and two air calliopes. The steam calliope was painted red and had cut out tin sunbursts over the



Elephants in Al G. Barnes parade at Memphis, Tenn., Aug. 9, 1920. Cheerful Gardner, supt. of elephants, is on horseback just to right of the lead animal. Photo by Ralph Miller (Joe Bradbury Collection).

wheels. There were very little carvings on the wagon. A woman played the steamer and did a bad job of it. The air calliope which played with Eddie Woekener's band during the performance was housed in the larger of the two wagons. It had a lyre in the center cut of tin. The smaller air calliope was painted yellow and it was in a delapidated condition (as were the rest of Barnes' rolling stock of that period). It had a painting of a woman with a mandolin on the back. This wagon was in front of the bulls when it made parade and was one of several wagons later left on the lot in Kansas City.

"When the show played Kansas City, August 21-22, the Rhino Tableau (formerly on Sells Floto and other shows) and some baggage wagons were purchased from that Horne Zoological Gardens Co. Among the baggage wagons was a stringer wagon with whole sides painted to represent a United States flag. It had been on the 1917 Jess Willard-Buffalo Bill Wild West Show (former 101 Ranch equipment). The Barnes' wagons which the new ones from Horne replaced were just left on the Kansas City lot. One wagon left was the stake and chain, formerly an old furniture van, a big wagon with a low seat and a duck bill extending over the seat. The small air calliope and the yellow ticket wagon were among others that were abandoned. I suppose that Horne, Beggs, or somebody picked up the wagons as the yellow ticket wagon appears in 1925 in the Frank J. Taylor Circus photos and it was also used on Cook & Cole in 1927. While in Kansas City Barnes also received four new wheels from St. Mary's Wheel Works to go on the big top canvas wagon.

"While I was on the show Barnes purchased three former John Robin-

son Ten Big Shows cottage type cages and two small racing chariots from Ben Wallace of Peru, Indiana.

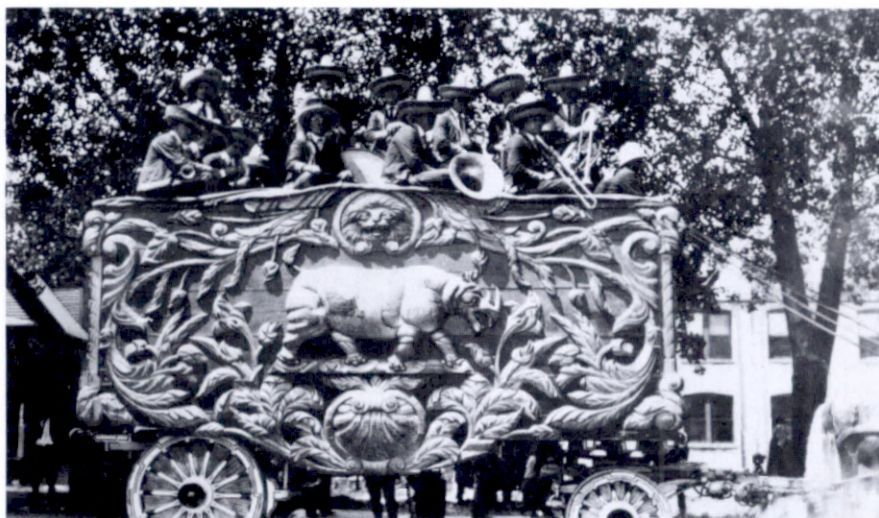
"Also, when I was with Barnes the show got seven sleeping cars just out of Pullman service. However, they didn't all come the same day. The private car, Francisco, remained with the train. In 1921 Barnes got new Mt. Vernon built steel flats and stock cars. I don't know where the old cars went but probably to some carnival.

"There were no trucks on the show in 1920; just an automobile. They had a big ramshackled garage wagon which was left at the runs each day. It was said to have come from the Ringling show where it had housed one of the brother's cars.

"The flag team that closed the performance ran around the hippodrome track after Mabel Stark went up with the balloon lion. There was a long Yankee flag running down both sides of the team with Austin King made up like Uncle Sam standing on the wheel team. It went hell for leather around the track with Ed Woeckener's band playing "Yankee Doodle." Barney and Vance, team of small male elephants, would go into the big top when the flag team passed and hitch onto the small cage that carried "George," the balloon lion, and haul it to the train. This team of bulls moved the cage from the cars to the lot and back again. They also pulled it in the street parade and in the Alice in Jungleland spec."

This concludes Bill Woodcock's reminiscences of the 1920 season. The John Robinson cages and racing chariots probably arrived on the show while it was playing its Peoria, Illinois, date on 31 July. Rosselli's reported to the *Billboard* that: "four new parade wagons arrived at Peoria and the Governor has purchased twelve draught horses of superior quality." He also mentions that Frank Rooney was the new boss hostler.

The famous Rhino Tableau had been part of the equipment on the Great Wallace Circus since about 1895. Shortly after the Great Wallace and the Carl Hagenbeck Greater Shows were combined to form Hagenbeck-



The Rhino tableau was purchased by Al G. Barnes from the Horne Zoological Arena Co. of Kansas City, Mo., in 1920. A stringer wagon that had been on the Miller Bros. 101 Ranch was also purchased at the same time. Pfening Archives.

Wallace in 1907 it was sold to the Sells Floto Circus. The whereabouts of the Rhino Tableau from the time it disappeared from the Sells Floto Circus until it showed up on the Al G. Barnes' Circus in 1920 is a mystery. Joe Bradbury has reported that it was on Tom Wiederman's Barton & Bailey Circus out of the Hall farm in 1915. In 1916 and 1917 it was on the Coop & Lent show which was purchased by the Horne Zoological Garden's Co. in mid-season 1917.

Richard Conover has written that if it was on Barton & Bailey it is probable that it was already at the Hall Farm before the show was framed there in 1915. It is quite reasonable

Al G. Barnes Circus on the lot at Memphis, Tenn., Aug. 9, 1920. Note the Three Panel Painting tableau used as No. 2 bandwagon, second wagon from left. Immediately to right of the center cage is the former Great Wallace bay window cage. Frank Pouska Collection.

for it to have been on Coop & Lent in 1916-17 because equipment which was not put on truck chassis for the 1918 show ended up in the possession of Horne.

The wagon was destroyed in 1952 after standing on a lot in Los Angeles. The owner rented circus equipment to the movie studios. This was probably Jimmy Woods' place in Venice.

For the first time in its history the Barnes' Show played Springfield, Illinois, and made a two-mile haul to the lot which resulted in a late parade. However, there were two turnaway performances in spite of the delay. Lincoln brought out a fair matinee and a good night house. There was also a long haul to the lot in Decatur but efficient street car service resulted in two more turnaways. At Mattoon there was a fair matinee and a big attendance at night. Olney, the last Illinois date, furnished a good lot in the center of town and there was fine business. The show returned to Evansville, Indiana, for one day and then moved to Paducah, Kentucky, but was delayed by a railroad wreck on the line for nine hours. The wreck involved another train, not the Barnes' Show. There was a long haul to a poor lot which was very sandy.



The delay prevented the parade and the afternoon performance started at four-thirty to a good crowd. The next day at Dyersburg, Tennessee, brought in a good afternoon attendance but was only fair at night.

Memphis, the following day, had the largest crowds of the season with thousands of people being turned away despite the fact that three performances were given. This was the first date of the Barnes' Show in that city. The next three stands were in Paragould, Arkansas, and Poplar Bluff and De Soto, Missouri. Then came the three-day date in St. Louis on August 13-15. Here, the doors were closed long before the performance started on Friday night while Saturday was a turnaway at each performance. The show had two good houses on Sunday despite continuous rain all day long.

It was while the show was in St. Louis that the seven new steel sleepers, mentioned by Woodcock, arrived and the circus people spent all off moments moving to the new quarters. A new Pullman dining car arrived and was put in charge of C.I. Norris. This trainer's baboon act had been contracted to fair dates and "Shrimp" Settler set off for those engagements in charge of the act. It was mentioned in Rosselli's report that the old coaches had been sold. Woodcock's belief that they went to a carnival has some foundation since several operators of that type of show visited at the St. Louis stand. Among them were men from the Rice & Dorman Shows, the Nat Reiss Carnival, the Wortham Shows and perhaps others. Representatives of the Sells Floto Circus, Ringling-Barnum & Bailey Circus and Yankee Robinson Circus were also guests.

After St. Louis the Barnes' Show

Al G. Barnes backyard at Evansville, Indiana, August 5, 1920. In foreground elephants are preparing to enter big top for opening spec. In rear at left is the former Forepaugh-Sells Swan and Fawn tableau



(Season of 1920.)
Only One Date To Remember!
VICKSBURG
THURSDAY **Sept 30**

AL G. BARNES' BIG 4
WILD ANIMAL CIRCUS
RING

EVERY ACT OF ANIMAL ACT—EVERY ANIMAL AN ACT

30 AL. G. BARNES' \$50,000 CHALLENGE GROUP 30
LIONS IN ONE BIG ACT 30
THE ONLY REAL WILD ANIMAL CIRCUS ON EARTH!
Performing Lions, Tigers, Leopards, Jaguars, Panthers, Bears, Rhinos, Elephants, Giraffes and Polar Bears, Gophers, Camels, Zebras, Lions, Yaks, Zebras, Ostriches, Ducks, Monkeys.

20 The Most Amazing Animal Act Ever!
Performing Bengal and Chinese Tigers
Including KAJAR, \$10,000 Wrestling Tiger
20

LOTUS SEE **OKAPI**
HINDUSTANIS BEAUTY

40 AN EQUESTRIAN ACT SUPREME! **40**
DANCING HORSES—DANCING GIRLS
THE ONLY EDUCATED GIBBON IN THE WORLD SEE THE ASSAULT ON **SAMSON**

MR. BARNES OFFERS AN ADDED ATTRACTION FOR THE SEASON A MOST NOVEL, STUNNING AND GLEAMINGLY GORGEOUS DISPLAY OF 10,000 MEDALS—PALESTINE—

THE FAIRYLAND FANTASY
HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE
HUNDREDS OF HORSES
QUANTITIES OF ANIMALS

ALICE IN JUNGLELAND

DOORS OPEN 1 and 7 P.M. PERFORMANCES 2 and 8 P.M. STREET PARADE 10:30 A.M. Daily

This newspaper ad was used by the Barnes show in Vicksburg, Miss. in 1920. The ad was used for a number of years. Pfening Archives.

played two capacity houses in St. Charles; good attendance at both shows in Mexico; and a long haul with a fair afternoon and a fine night house in Columbia. At Brunswick it rained in torrents and there was no parade. There was a bad lot with knee-deep mud and only fair patronage. There were two full houses at Excelsior Springs. The next stand was the two

which Barnes purchased in 1912. At right is the Three Panel Painting tableau which served as the No. 2 bandwagon in the 1920 parade. Photo by Karl Knecht (Pfening Archives).



days at Kansas City where, according to a report from the show, "new elephants and a giraffe, and six new cages were awaiting the show's arrival." According to all research this didn't happen.

There were eight more stands played to complete the Missouri tour and then the show went to Oklahoma for three dates and Arkansas for nine stands before entering Louisiana. It made several of the smaller cities in that state before playing three days in New Orleans. This was a very successful engagement. The *Billboard* article stated:

"The New Orleans date proved that the Barnes' Circus has lost none of its popularity — three capacity houses in spite of the rain that fell in torrents. So thick was the mud that it was impossible to walk. The performers were compelled to wear rubber boots, and ton after ton of straw and hay spread about the track disappeared as soon as it was put down. The people were in a panic regarding a tropical storm, but it made no difference to the show-folks. Thousands stood ankle deep in mud and the six performances were packed to utter capacity. The show was until noon Monday getting away from New Orleans and was obliged to cancel the Baton Rouge date."

Natchez, Miss., was cold and rainy, but the show played to good business. Port Gibson had a bad lot and there was only one performance given at that town. Vicksburg was fine and in close proximity to the Rhoda Royal Circus and visits were exchanged. After playing Greenville and Clarksdale the Barnes' Show made a 123-mile run to Wynne, Arkansas, and in spite of cold, disagreeable weather gave two performances to satisfactory business. Another 101-mile run to

Another view of Al G. Barnes backyard at Evansville, Indiana, August 5, 1920. In foreground is the balloon lion cage drawn by elephant hitch ready for the opening spec. Photo by Karl Knecht (Pfening Archives).



This bay window cage was originally built for the Great Wallace Shows. The wagon came to the Barnes show around 1914. It carried a group of lions in 1920 on the Barnes show. Photo by Ralph Miller from Pfening Archives.

Batesville provided a good town for the show. Yellville, on 6 October, was given only a matinee with a fine crowd. The people of Yellville had never before seen a hippopotamus and Lotus was a big hit. The circus closed the week with successful dates at Pittsburg, Ft. Scott and Iola, Kansas.

The Barnes' Show lingered for yet another two weeks in Kansas (with a day at Blackwell, Oklahoma, thrown in) and then went into Colorado for four stands. At this time, the side-show manager, Bobby Fountain, and Al Sands, the manager, rejoined the show. Both had been quite ill. Fountain had remained at Hot Springs, Arkansas, to recuperate, but Sands was still under the weather when he caught up with the circus. Wm. Peck, railroad contracting agent, had been called to the show to take Sands' place while the latter was absent. Another novelty, Professor Fritz Lecardo, a sword swallower, had been added to the side-show while the circus was in Kansas.

"Egypt" Thompson and Marguerite Thompson had also rejoined the show during October. The former's duties were not listed, but Marguerite worked the puma and the leopard acts. It was announced that Martha Florine would repeat her performance as "Alice" in the spectacle in 1921 and that Ed Woeckener would be engaged during the winter to write the musical score for the next year's production.

The Barnes' Circus entered New Mexico at Las Vegas on 27 October and made five stands in that state and then played El Paso, Texas, on 1 November after moving as far west as Albuquerque. The last two of the five



dates in New Mexico (Lordsburg and Deming) came after this single Texas stand, and then the show rolled into Arizona to play seven towns. The last of these was Tucson on 11 November.

On 14 November, the day after the Barnes' Show left San Bernardino, California, Bobby Fountain died. He had been plagued by poor health for months and during the season had been forced to get medical attention away from the circus on several occasions. He had been stricken severely when the circus reached San Bernardino and died the day after the show made its date there. Fountain had been one of the outstanding side-show managers in the country. In his early days he conducted one of the popular

Al G. Barnes backyard at Evansville, Indiana, Aug. 5, 1920. In foreground are trained black bears in harness ready for the performance. In back are the Swan and Fawn, Three Panel Painting tableau wagons, and the balloon lion cage. Photo by Karl Knecht (Pfening Archives).



This photo shows the cage which Barnes bought from Wallace while it was on the Great Wallace Shows in 1906. It was not altered after arriving on Barnes. Pfening Archives.

repertoire companies in the mid-West and gained prominence as an actor-manager. Later he organized a two-car show which carried circus acts and also presented vaudeville and dramatic features. (A 1909 *Billboard* has a report of his show from Nebraska, and thus indicates his early ventures into ownership.)

From San Bernardino the Barnes' Circus made one last week to conclude the 1920 season. It played Pasadena, Ventura, Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo. It closed at this last city on 20 November.

On 25 December, the *Billboard* reported that Al G. Barnes had purchased eighty acres of land on the main road between Los Angeles and Venice. The Pacific & Electric Rail-



road ran a spur track to the spot from its main line.

Gordon Borders, a specialist on the Al G. Barnes' Circus and model builder, wrote a very interesting article concerning the Culver City - Palms quarters in the July-August 1967 issue of *Bandwagon*. Borders' report begins with the statement: "During the winter of 1919-1920 Al G. Barnes purchased 300 acres of ranch land west of Culver City, California, in three separate locations. A portion of a tract consisting of about 100 acres was selected as a site for a new winter quarters for the Barnes' Circus."

Obviously Barnes had purchased this land previous to the report in the December 1920 *Billboard*. Borders report was surely the correct date of purchase. He defined the dimensions of this property used for the quarters. It extended 768 ft. on Washington Boulevard; 860 ft. along Purdue; 470 ft. along the Pacific Electric Railway track; and 950 ft. from Washington Blvd. to the P.E.R.R. on the west side of the lot.

All of this area was ranch land at the time; there were no roads except dirt tracks leading to the ranch houses. Even Washington Blvd. was only 25 ft. wide. At present, and for many years, the ranch area has been re-

Al G. Barnes Circus first used its new quarters near Culver City, Calif. (often referred to Palms or Barnes City) following the 1920 season. This aerial view was taken in early 1921. Note the train parked on sidings at top center of photo. Also note the old wooden flat cars. These were shortly replaced with new steel Mt. Vernon built cars. Joe Bradbury Collection.

placed by modern highways and streets, houses, commercial buildings and industries. The only part remaining, although it has been moved, is the ranch house originally the home of the Al G. Barnes family. It was in 1967 used as the Sunday School building of the West Culver City Baptist Church.

The reader is referred to this article in the *Bandwagon* for further details and excellent photographs of the Culver City-Palms quarters. There is also an excellent map of the land used by Barnes. A brief summary of the construction follows: When the Barnes' Circus arrived at this quarters for the first time following the close of the 1920 tour there were five ranch buildings on the property and a contractor had constructed some of the cat cages, ring stock stables and a few other structures. Also four tracks had been built along the Sawtelle side of

the property. They were extended from the Del Ray line at the rear.

The show spent the 1921-22 winter at this location but did not return at the end of the 1922 season. When it arrived back in Culver City at the end of the 1923 season the quarters had been completed. The large wagon shop with the canvas loft was completed in 1921. In 1922 the large facade at the entrance and Tusko's paddock were built.

The winter of 1926-27 was the last for the show at Culver City. Barnes sold the quarters to a developer shortly after the circus went on the road in 1927.

Borders states that the baggage stock was always kept about two miles west of the quarters on pasture land that Barnes had purchased at the same time he bought the site. This is not entirely correct for in some years he pastured the baggage stock on a ranch near San Luis Obispo. As will be seen he encountered considerable difficulty moving the horses to Culver City in the spring of 1924, the year of the hoof-and-mouth epidemic in California.

In conclusion the writer would like to acknowledge all the historians who have done so much research that has contributed to the preparation of these articles. Among those assisting have been: Joe Bradbury, Don Francis, Bob MacDougall, Fred Pfening, Jr., Fred Pfening III, Joe Rettinger, and Bill Woodcock, who collected so much historical material and generously shared it with other historians. Of course, Joe Bradbury has been a guiding factor with Don Francis searching out much materials.

BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS



This style letterhead was used by the Great Wallace Shows in 1902. The title is in black highlighted in red, and the photo of Wallace is in brown.

THE WORLD IN A NUT SHELL: Wallace & Co., 1890 & 1891

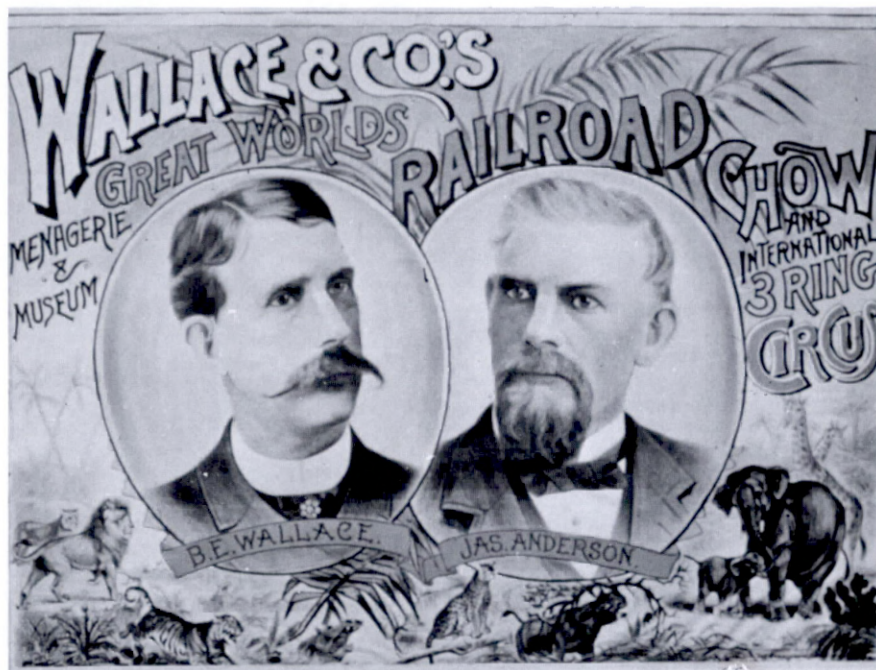
By Orin C. King

"On Sunday a gentle penetrating rain had fallen, but the sun of Monday (May 19, 1890) rose gloriously, the day was the most charming of the year, the air clear and pure, the grass glistened fresh and green, no dust, no wind, a perfect day, just such a day as Wallace & Anderson would have made to order if it were possible on the occasion of their circus performance. Everything on this lovely May day combined to make it ever long to be remembered as a day of pleasure. Never in the history of Ellsworth have we had so enjoyable a circus, so satisfactory a show; from the hour of the street parade in the morning until the close of the evening performance, everybody was happy, nothing occurred to mar the occasion. The show itself far surpassed our expectations." Ellsworth, Kansas, *Reporter*, May 22, 1890.

In Fredonia, the *Wilson County Citizen* on Friday, May 16, reported, "Wallace & Co.'s menagerie and circus, which exhibited in Fredonia on Wednesday (May 14), was successful and creditable as to the street parade, the menagerie and the circus performance. The latter probably combined as much of variety as any circus that ever visited Fredonia, while in real merit as to the ability and skill of its performers it equalled the best show that ever struck the town. The balloon ascension was a flat failure, a hole having been accidentally burned in the side of the balloon just before the time announced for it to go up that absolutely prevented carrying out this part of the programme. The attendance was nearly as great as at former circuses in spite of the hard times, and the show was highly satisfactory to all."

"The circus has come and gone, and the general verdict is one of unqualified approval," the *McPherson Democrat*, May 30, stated in reviewing the exhibition of Monday, May 26. "Everything that was advertised was shown. Take it all around, Wallace & Co., have a model circus. The street parade in the morning was good; horses sleek and well trained, wagons and vans fresh and new, and animals well kept, and contented looking. The performance in the afternoon surpassed even the expectation of the large throng which attended. The music was good, and everything moved with clock work precision. No profanity, no loud talking or unseemly conduct by the employs (sic)."

"Wallace & Co.'s railroad show,



which appeared in this city on Saturday last (May 31), proved to be a success. The street parade was unusually good. The horses were superb." *Osage City Free Press*, June 5.

The show advertised in the press under two titles, Wallace & Co., and, less frequently, Wallace & Anderson. The only mention of James Anderson appeared in the Topeka papers for the exhibition of August 19. In 1873 Anderson had operated a transfer and omnibus company in Topeka. The seasons of 1878 and 1879 found him in the management of Sells Brothers' number two show operating under the name of Anderson & Co., but with Anderson subservient to Lewis Sells. In later years after the connection was established between James A. Bailey and William F. Cody, Anderson returned to Topeka, Wednesday, October 21, 1896, as "superintendent" of the Buffalo Bill show.

Wallace & Company played 19 dates in Kansas in May of 1890, returning in August for 13 more. Everywhere, the show received rave notices. "Wallace & Co.'s circus attracted a tremendous crowd last Thursday (August 14). And it was a good show, probably the best that Iola ever saw." *Iola Register*, August 22.

The *Garnett Weekly Journal*, August 22, reported, "The circus has come and gone. (Saturday, August 16). It was far superior to the average. The

wind and rain in the evening prevented any show, and as the managers announced that there would be none, a great many dollars were refunded on tickets."

The show lost another evening performance at Council Grove, Monday, August 18, because of transportation problems involved in moving to Topeka for exhibitions Tuesday, August 19. "Last Monday," reported the *Council Grove Guard* on August 22, "the above-named show pitched its tents in our city and gave an entertainment in the afternoon—an entertainment that was witnessed by over 3,500 people. With this show there are over one hundred and fifty finely bred horses, including fifteen of the prettiest Shetland ponies every seen anywhere. The performance, from beginning to end—bareback riding, trapeze performing, rope walking, etc.—was first-class."

Despite eliminating the evening performance at Council Grove, the show was late in reaching Topeka because of the break-down of a Missouri Pacific locomotive. The parade began at 1:30, and the *Kansas Democrat* remarked that, "The horses displayed in it are the finest ever seen on the streets of Topeka."

The *Topeka State Journal* pronounced the circus "a success, and the people who attended were pleased with everything they saw." George H. Robinson, agent for the circus, was

also pleased when he succeeded in getting the Topeka city council to cut the license fee in half, to \$75, by convincing them his show was only half as large as Forepaugh's, Barnum's and Sells Brothers', and, therefore, should be charged but half as much as the giants.

All the papers in the Kansas towns where Wallace & Company exhibited had praise for the appearance of the show, the quality of the performance, the music, and especially the horses. Individual performers were seldom mentioned, but occasionally there was praise for clown, Charles Sweeney; bareback riders Pauline Lee and Charles Ewers; the "flying sailor" act of Bernie Wallace; Miss Lucille and Mr. Jordan on the flying trapeze; the Melrose family of bicyclists; the dancing rope act of Park Melrose; and the six performing mules.

The reports on the performance and the new and clean look of the equipment, and the horses, are reminiscent of the reviews garnered by the Ringling brothers on their way to the top, but behind the glowing picture of Wallace & Company there was a sinister nastiness never tolerated by the Ringlings.

Editors frequently wrote glowing reviews of the performance and the gentlemanly conduct of the employees in one column, and in a separate story in a different column, or a different page, reported rampant gambling and mistreatment of the customers, apparently without ever discovering a connection between Ben Wallace and his gentlemanly staff, and the notorious riff-raff that preyed upon the townspeople. Gambling could not have flourished without the permission and protection of the management, but the newspapers seldom reported the relationship.

The *Wilson County Citizen*, Fredonia, one of the few papers to connect Wallace with the gamblers, reported, "In another place the *Citizen* commends Wallace & Co.'s circus as a creditable institution as a show, but it must say that it is not commendable of the manager to permit gamblers to ply their confidence games on open ground immediately in front of the main entrance thereto.

"The victims included professional men, successful farmers and one preacher. Some were gray-haired and other not only gray-haired but quite devout church men.

"One farmer near town is said to have lost \$150, while other lost from \$50 down to \$15. Quite a number of them lived in town. A variety of comment might be offered, but what's the use?"

"One man," according to the Council Grove *Guard*, August 22, "lost enough on the 'shell game' last Monday (August 18) in fifteen minutes to

amount to twenty-five loads of corn at fifteen cents per bushel, and from the distance he lives from town it would require twenty-five days to husk and haul the same to market, to say nothing of the time and cost of raising it. Those 'nut shell' men are not traveling for their health."

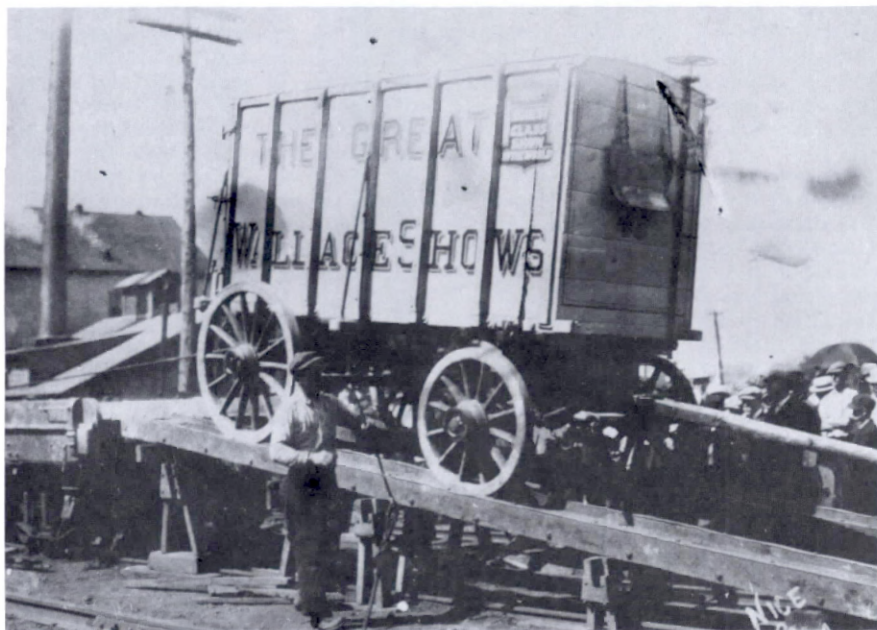
The following day, Tuesday, August 19, in Topeka, the *Kansas Democrat* stated, "No fakirs are permitted to hang upon its skirts and fatten from its patrons, and this fact has given the people confidence in it wherever it has been."

Perhaps, after the sacking of Council Grove, the gamblers felt it prudent to lay low for a while. Perhaps, a fix could not be made with the Topeka police. Perhaps, none of the losers complained to the authorities. Perhaps, the reporter was blind. Possibly, all of the above.

In most of the towns, the situation agreed with the comment made in the *Ellsworth Reporter*, despite an idyllic review in another column. "A couple of our thrifty farmers from the country lost a little money at the circus last Monday, and of course they were mad about it. I wonder how they would have felt if they had won?"

None of the papers had any sympathy for the suckers, and expressed contempt for the "cry-baby losers" who demanded action from the sheriff. The reputation of the show was surely known in advance by the press through a wide ranging exchange of publications between towns. Lawmen,

A number of wagons on the Wallace show were built by the Studebaker company of South Bend, Indiana. Each of the wagons carried an emblem reading "The Highest Class Circus in the World." Otto Scheiman Collection.



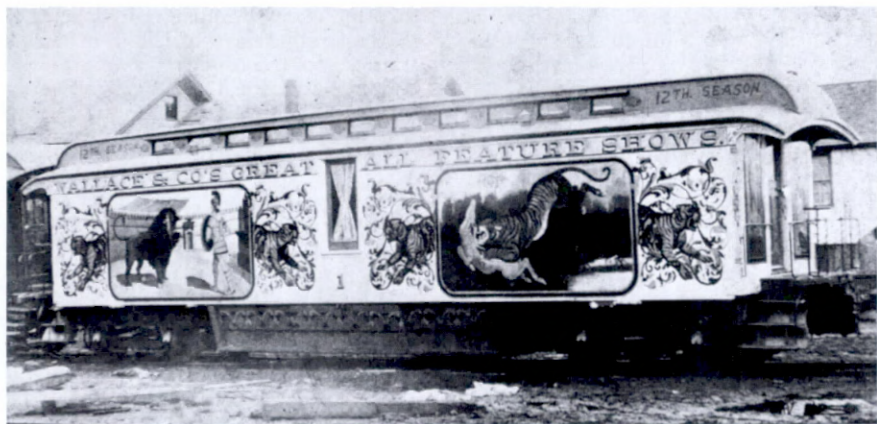
through their professional grapevine, were surely aware of the gamblers.

In view of the unsavory facts known about Wallace & Company, it seems remarkable that two things did not happen. Nowhere, in advance of the exhibition, did any paper publish a warning to the public. Wallace & Company advertised liberally in the papers, usually with a two column ad running the depth of the page. Were editors influenced by advertising money?

The second thing that did not happen was the refusal of any city government to issue a license. Extensive research has so far failed to reveal any Kansas town that ever refused a license to any circus. In the moral climate of Kansas in the 1890's, it was clearly the duty of government to protect the public from sin, especially whiskey, prostitution and gambling, all of which flourished half-openly. The circus brought tickets to the officials and sometimes "other benefits," and, to the city treasury, money. The publishers welcomed the windfall of circus advertising which in the case of Wallace & Company, was paid in full in cash on show day by Willis Cobb with silver dollars from his little black bag.

An explanation of the mechanics of circus gambling appeared in the *Topeka State Journal*, July 4, 1895, in an interview with "Red" Laird, a Topeka tough who worked on nearly all of the shows promoted by Willie Sells. The reporter's attempt to convey Laird's murder of the English language distracts from the story, but the style was common in the 1890's. The interview was the day after the Wallace appearance in Topeka on Wednesday, July 3, 1895.

"'Graftin is a good ting,' said Topekan Red Laird who traveled last year



with Wallace's show, 'as long as you're working under protection. When it's fixed so's when night comes the coppers gets deir bit out of the winnings it's safe.'

"Who is the man that manages the police?", the reporter asked.

"We have a fixer or a squarer, or anything you choose to call him. He's generally a lawyer what's gone wrong. Those with gray hair does best. When the circus strikes a town de fixer goes up town and sees the main blokes of the burg and meets the chief of the coppers. Both of his hip-pockets is sticking out wid circus tickets and he's got a roll of dough as big as a sheriff's at the end of his term.

"He cuts dis coin up wid de coppers and gives dem all tickets for their families. Den he tells de main copper to keep de common flatties off de circus lot all day."

"What is a 'flattie'?"

"Just a common copper on de beat. A grafter tinks it's a disgrace to stand a pinch by anything less'n a sergeant or a captain. Well, as I was saying, along in de afternoon de chief he comes down to de lot and de fixer meets him at de door. Someone gives de office to slough (sic), that's for the grafters to duck awhile. Den de fixer and de main copper takes a booze and de fixer slips anoder bill wid a saw-buck on each end in de officer's mitt and tells him "send your flatties out in de country to look for de shell men," and he does it.

"Den der fixer says: Milly Cheese is about to do her wonderful bareback ack, don't you want to see it? "Does she wear tights?" asks de chief. "Yes," says de fixer. "All right," says de chief and away dey go over inter de big show, and once more de side show and de farmers is left to the grafters to hide de little black ball what has won millions of coin from de guys."

During the season of 1890, the Kansas papers were lavish in praise of Willis Cobb, press agent, traveling with the show. "We have never had dealings with a more honorable and courteous lot of show people, and to Mr. Willis Cobb, the press manager of

The Wallace & Co's Great All Feature Shows advance car shown in Peru, Indiana on April 7, 1890. Pfening Archives.

this mammoth combination, we are indebted for ever courtesy that was in his power to extend. We hope to meet all of these people in our city again before another Republican is elected to succeed President Harrison." *Council Grove Guard*, August 22, 1890.

"Willis Cobb, the noted circus press agent, who has been in the business for thirty years and is known the country over as one of the pleasantest men in the profession, is with Wallace & Anderson's circus which is exhibiting in Topeka today." *Topeka State Journal*, August 19, 1890.

"One of the drawing cards to the circus was the press agent, Willis Cobb, the gentleman who, more than any other man, gave to Sells circus its popularity. He is the gentleman who instituted the policy among show managers of not making a practise of robbing every town that comes in their path. He takes his little sack and pays all bills before the tent opens." *Junction City Union*, August 23, 1890.

The *Iola Register*, August 22, said it best. "He has been in the business of looking after the printers for twenty years, and he does it like a king, making each one of them his personal guest, and sending him away feeling as if he owned the earth and the fullness thereof. It is a hard heart indeed that would not reciprocate by giving the show a good send-off."

No one ever questioned the integrity of Willis Cobb, but one can not help wonder how a man so eminently respectable as Cobb could condescend to work for Ben Wallace and work so successfully that no matter what the chicanery indulged in, the show left town with a "good send-off."

Cobb appeared with Dan Castello's Monster Show Comprising Nixon's New York Circus, Howe's U.S. Circus & Castello's Trained Animals which exhibited at Leavenworth, Kansas, Saturday, September 26, 1868. Listed

in the newspaper ad is "Prof. Willis Cobb and his troupe of educated Dogs, Goats and Monkeys."

The Great European Zoological Association of the Sells brothers appeared in several Kansas towns in 1876. For Humboldt, Monday, Aug. 28, advertising in the *Union* featured "Willis Cobb's great troupe of performing Dogs, Goats and Monkeys, the best in the world; three great Clowns, James Maguire, Willis Cobb and Samuel Rinehart."

October of 1876 found the Sells' show bedded down for the winter on the fairgrounds in Topeka. Cobb immediately became a favorite of the newspaper men for his willingness to help them get a story; and his name appeared frequently in Topeka papers for the next four years.

Sells Brothers Great European Zoological Association, Museum, Royal Colosseum and Circus opened the season of 1877 in Topeka, Monday and Tuesday, April 16 and 17. The *Topeka Daily Blade*, reviewing the show on April 18, reported, "Willis Cobb's educated animal performance is almost one-half of the show. It is ahead of anything of the kind on the road."

The *Ottawa Republican*, April 12, 1877, carried an advertisement for the exhibition of Monday, April 25, briefly describing Cobb's miniature circus.

"Another Glorious Feature—Mr. Willis Cobb's celebrated troupe of Performing Dogs, Goats and Monkeys. Riding Goats, Riding Monkeys, the celebrated Tightrope Performing Monkey, 'Jack Darwin, the Hurdle Riding Monkey,' 'Biddy Muldoon,' the Female Bounding Jockey, 'Tony Hart,' the only monkey on earth that performs the La Perche Act. His dogs, nine in number, perform a greater number of feats than all the other troupes of dogs in America combined, led by the world-renowned Clown Dog 'Bloss,' the \$1000 Challenge Dog."

Sells Brothers' Millionaire Confederation of Stupendous Railroad Shows opened the season of 1880 in Topeka on Tuesday, April 20. The *Daily Commonwealth*, Monday, March 30, reported, "Mr. Willis Cobb, who has charge of the menagerie of Sells Brothers' show, arrived in Topeka on Saturday (March 28) and will remain here until the show starts out, which will be on the 20th of April. Mr. Cobb is a young man whom one likes as soon as he has become acquainted with him and is always ready to give information."

Cobb brought with him the six Colorado cattle that he had trained during the winter. The *Commonwealth* thought it, "easy to understand how a horse may be taught, but it would seem a difficult matter to instruct the usually awkward cow or steer in the figures of a waltz or quadrille. Still, Mr. Cobb has accomplished all of this

and more too. That he is a wonderful master of animals has been most certainly demonstrated. The dogs and small animals are wonders too." Two of the cattle died during the season. Before leaving Columbus, Ohio, for Topeka, friends had presented Cobb with a performance whip with a jeweled stock and his name woven into the threads.

Cobb was the darling of the Topeka press corps. Everything he did was newsworthy. The *Capital* reported, April 10, that, "Mr. Willis Cobb, assistant manager for Sells Bros., who suffered the painful operation of having a polypus removed from his left nostril a few days ago, we are glad to state, is now almost entirely well again and is out attending to his numerous duties. Dr. Gibson, of this city, was Mr. Cobb's surgeon, and performed the operation in a very skillful manner."

On the very day the *Capital* reported the surgery, April 10, Cobb was back in Gibson's office to be treated for the wounds made by a tiger's claws. While showing the animals to C.W. Price, editor of the *Capital*, Cobb stumbled, and, in a reflex action, grabbed the bars of the tiger's den. The animal instantly sank his claws into Cobb's arm and held on until Price pulled Cobb away from the cage. It was a cold day and Cobb was wearing a heavy overcoat. The claws pierced the overcoat, Cobb's suit coat and shirt, but the thickness of the fabric prevented a serious wound. Dr. Gibson treated the punctures and Cobb was soon as good as new.

Cobb was always news in Topeka. In August of 1881 the Topeka papers reported the death of Mrs. Cobb. His wedding to the Widow Johnson, a sister of the Sells brothers, in September of 1883, was also news in Topeka.

For several years Cobb handled the press on show day for Sells brothers. It was a relatively easy job, for the Sells brothers were reasonably honest men who had separated from the fakirs years ago and had little to hide from the world and small need for explanations and apologies. On the other hand, to get the Wallace show out of town with a good review required all of the experience, wisdom and personality that a press agent could muster. Willis Cobb was eminently successful.

All through the season of 1890, in Kansas, there was high praise for the show, the horses, the music, the equipment and condemnation for the gambling. The repugnant gambling of 1890, however, was only a pale prelude to the season that followed.

Wallace & Company's great World's 50-Cage Menagerie, Roman Hippodrome and International Three-Ring Circus entered Kansas for the season of 1891 at Atchison with an unevent-

ful exhibition of Wednesday, September 16. The next town, Olathe, Thursday, September 17, was followed by Ottawa, Friday, September 18, Chanute, Saturday, September 19, and Coffeyville on Monday, September 21.

The Olathe *Mirror* reported that, "By the courtesy of Mr. Willis Cobb, press agent, a representative of the *Mirror*, his family and a few friends were kindly shown the mammoth show last Thursday. Both the menagerie and the circus were first class—the best ever seen in Olathe, while all departments were unexcelled; the horses showed superior training, showing almost human intelligence, and was, perhaps, the most interesting feature of the entertainment. The employees were all courteous, accomplished gentlemen, with whom it was a pleasure to meet, and the exhibition was all that was advertised. Their patronage was as liberal as it was deserving."



The cookhouse wagon with a six horse hitch on the Great Wallace Shows lot around 1902. The wagon was painted yellow. Pfening Archives.

The Ottawa *Journal* reported that, "The Wallace circus, which displayed here last Friday, has never been surpassed in real merit by an preceding circus that ever exhibited in Ottawa."

The Ottawa *Herald*, like the Olathe *Mirror*, devoted most of its review of the show Friday, September 18, to the cordiality of Willis Cobb. "Through the courtesy of Wallace & Co.'s gentlemanly press agent, Mr. Willis Cobb, the editorial fraternity of this city were treated to special favors and were permitted to see one of the best shows on the road last Friday. Mr. Cobb is a newspaper man himself and like all (?) (sic) newspaper men is genial, pleasant and one of the most accommodating press agents we ever met."

Further on in the story, the *Herald* stated, "The circus was one of the nicest and cleanest traveling and was free from all manner of vulgarity, and another noticeable feature was the absence of fakes, pickpockets and thieves. They had the finest lot of horses we ever saw."

The Coffeyville *Journal* on Septem-

ber 25 carried an interesting story about the exhibiton of Monday, September 21. "On Sunday evening wagons and vehicles of all kinds commenced to roll into town from the south. After dark, little camp fires could be seen burning here and there all over the city and others took quarters at the hotels. On Monday morning by 8:30 o'clock our streets were thronged with people and the uninformed would have surmised that something unusual was booked for the day. The unusual occurrence was the advent of the mammoth shows of Wallace & Co. Promptly at 10:00 the gorgeous parade began, headed by one of the finest bands to which it has ever been our good fortune to listen. They were followed by mounted acrobats in handsome costumes, sixteen large animals cars, two more bands, a steam callopie, three enormous elephants, camels and other rare quadrupeds. The parade was pronounced by all to

be the best ever seen in Coffeyville."

The *Journal* was much impressed with Willis Cobb, flattered and grateful for all the courtesies Cobb showered upon the Coffeyville press. Like all the other papers, the *Journal* gave more space to Cobb than it did to the show, concluding with, "We will always keep a warm spot in our hearts for our friend Mr. Willis Cobb, Press Manager of Wallace & Co.'s shows, for the kind treatment received at his hands."

To a remarkable degree Cobb was able to separate the performance from the gambling. Cobb was no "First of May," neither was he stupid. The gambling in the marquee, the connection, the side show, or whatever location was no secret to Cobb, yet the taint of suspicion was never upon him.

There is a measure of truth in the adage that, "Birds of a feather flock together." If Cobb's tenure with Wallace was limited to one season, it might be claimed that he did not know what he was getting into, but Cobb was on the Wallace shows for at least four years, including the disgraceful year of 1891, and after. What was the inducement that kept this paragon on the Wallace shows when he could have worked for many of the big shows? Did he receive an inflated salary? Was

he a partner of Wallace? Or did he quietly share in the gamblers' profits?

The appearance of the show in Howard, Kansas, Tuesday, September 22, 1891, drew lavish praise from the *Elk County Citizen* for the show and Willis Cobb. The editor commented: "Wallace's show is peculiarly fortunate in having as press manager, that veteran in catering to the amusement loving public, Willis Cobb, who is known to newspaper men all over the United States. Mr. Cobb is not an old man, having only reached the fifty fifth milestone in life's journey, but so long has he been before the American people, that he is regarded as almost a second Methuselah. Our first acquaintance with Mr. Cobb dates back to '68, and having met him several times in business relations, we but feel that it is a pleasure to have him come around. To those newspaper men who have not met him, we cordially recommend him as a fair, honest business man, and very pleasant gentleman socially. Success to him wherever he goes."

Beginning with the Howard date, Cobb would need every bit of good will he could get. The *Elk County Citizen*, Howard, September 23, reported, "It does seem astonishing that in this day and age men can be found foolish enough to lose their money in the various gambling games and devices that are found on almost every circus and fairground, but it is nevertheless true. The gamblers here with the circus yesterday carried off several hundred dollars of the money of people who were foolish enough to engage in their various games."

At Howard, an unnamed farmer was swindled out of \$20 by a gambler on the show, Lewis White. A warrant was issued for the arrest of White and Deputy Sheriff J.H. Henderson went to Wellington where the show was playing Wednesday, September 23. Henderson found his man and made the arrest. Friends of White surrounded Henderson, but were foiled in their attempt at rescue by the arrival of Sheriff Morse of Sumner County with three or four deputies. White was taken to jail and held until the departure of the 6:05 p.m. train for Howard.

Henderson shackled his prisoner to his seat on the train, hand and foot, and settled back to enjoy the trip. The first stop was at Dalton, six miles from Wellington. Three or four gamblers had bought tickets for Dalton and were in the car with the prisoner. Other thugs had rented rigs and, driving furiously, were waiting in Dalton when the train arrived. Two men held the engineer and fireman at gun point while other entered the cars. In the car where White was shackled, the gamblers held the travelers and train crew at bay with revolvers while the shackles were cut with a cold chisel. Deputy Henderson was pistol whipped

COMING COMING

THE COOK & WHITBY
COLOSSAL ENGLISH CIRCUS
MUSEUM AND MENAGERIE
—ALLIED WITH—
AMERICA'S RACING ASSOCIATION
AND JUPITER, THE RIDING LION.



50 Gages Rare and Valuable Animals.
A Herd of Elephants; a Drove of Camels,
100 Acts; 20 Aerial Artists,
50 Acrobats; 30 Hurricane Riders.

DON'T MISS THE PARADE AT 10:30 A. M.
More Bands, more Silver and Gold Wagons, more Open Dens,
more Magnificent Costumes, more Glorious, more Entertaining
and Instructive Features than you will ever get a chance to
see at one time again as long as you live.

EXCURSIONS RUN ON ALL RAILROADS. 1894
BLOOMINGTON, FRIDAY, MAY 11

about the head, dragged from the train and nearly beaten to death.

The next move of the gamblers was absolutely incredible. They piled into their carriages with the liberated prisoner, drove back to Wellington, paid their livery bill and returned to the lot for business as usual.

The next day the show played Caldwell, Thursday, September 24. The sheriff of Elk County with ten well-armed deputies went to the show grounds to arrest the fakirs. The gamblers had sufficient pre-knowledge to head for Indian Territory just a few miles away. The sheriff and four of his deputies pursued them, but were confronted in an ambush in the timber of Bluff Creek by 13 shotguns. According to the *Wichita Daily Beacon*, September 25, the posse was ordered to retreat "under penalty of assassination right then and there." Discretion being the better part of valor, the sheriff and his men returned to Wellington. Three of the fakirs reportedly escaped to Indian Territory and the others returned to the show. The posse did arrest two men.

Sheriff Frank Henderson, Elk County, met with Sheriff Morse, Sumner County, and it was decided to capture the circus train that night at Wellington on its way to Arkansas City.

When the train stopped at the Well-

ington depot about one a.m., the gamblers received a surprise. Company B, 2d Regiment, Kansas National Guard, 39 officers and men under command of 1st Lt. J.S. Dey, surrounded the train. A guard with loaded rifle and fixed bayonet was placed at every door and the engine detached from the cars. Militiamen passed through the sleepers and herded all occupants into the station waiting room. The sheriffs took 32 of the suspects to the Sumner County jail. The arrest of Ben Wallace brought the total to 33. When the train had stopped at a cross-over on the edge of town, as required by Kansas law, Wallace had become suspicious of activity down the track and quietly removed himself from the train. Guardsmen discovered him loitering in the shadows and reunited him with his show in the county jail.

About 5:30 in the morning the train and the rest of the personnel were released and moved on to Arkansas City, Friday, September 25. On this day Deputy Henderson filed suit against Wallace & Company for \$40,000 and an attachment was ordered against the show train.

The National Guard participated in the seizure of the train as it passed through Mulvane on its way to Wichita on the 26th. The show was moving in two sections. Numerous red lights were placed along the road-bed and the track was greased for several hundred feet. Word of the posse reached the show and the engineer of the first section was persuaded not to heed the stop lights when Mulvane was reached about three a.m. The grease slowed the engine somewhat but the train did not stop. Thirty to forty shots were fired but there were no injuries.

The second section stopped. The train consisted of six coaches, a car of poinies and mules and a car loaded with elephants and camels. The stock cars were allowed to continue but the coaches were taken to Wellington.

The payroll for Company B, September 24 to 26, 1891, authorized by Capt. Ed Hayes, shows an average expenditure of \$4.16% per day per man for three days for 39 officers and men, \$12.50 per man, with a total expense to the State of \$587.50.

From a spate of cases filed in the District Court of Sumner County, Wellington, Kansas (Cases 604, 605, 606, 6078, 608) naming defendants in a myriad of combinations, it becomes evident that the state had great difficulty in making a case against anyone in the matter of the escape of Lewis White. Thirty-two warrants were issued for the arrest of show personnel but only four were bound over for trial. The State subpoenaed 41 witnesses and the defense, 34.

The only charge against Wallace that stuck was one involving the use of a girl under the age of 14 in a riding act

in violation of Kansas child labor laws. After four days in jail, Wallace was fined \$25 and released.

J.C. Clark, William Everett and John Handy, alias Eli Carver, were bound over for trial, December 9, 1891. Clark was released October 10 on \$500 bail posted by Mrs. Camilla Elliott. Everett and Handy were released October 29 when R.L. Beattie posted \$600 bond for each man. None of the defendants appeared for trial and in February, 1892, the bonds were declared forfeit. Rumors floated about that Wallace was going to sue Sumner County for \$50,000 damages, but no suit was filed.

On September 26 the first section of the Wallace train carrying the wagons, horses and paraphernalia sped through the red lights at Mulvane and arrived in Wichita at a comfortable hour. The show was unloaded and set up in a normal time. The two stock cars from the second section arrived later. Performers and other personnel came in on regular early morning trains from Wellington. The parade came off on time and the performance went as smoothly as ever, even though Wallace was in jail in Wellington. The coaches captured at Mulvane rejoined the show on the 29th after the bond of \$40,000 was posted.

The *Beacon*, the day before the exhibition warned its readers, "The circus will be here and an army of fakirs, pickpockets and smooth all-around gentlemen are following it. These fellows are supplied with all kinds of gambling devices to catch the verdant youths and reports from other towns show that those who operate them are tough citizens." So after the horse was stolen, the barn door was locked.

On the 28th, writing of show day, the *Beacon* reported, "The Wallace circus was here and is gone, but contrary to all expectations, it caused the community no trouble." The *Beacon* went on to pompously say, "To be sure there was a number of gamblers along with it who caught many suckers, but many people didn't blame them in view of the fact that the *Beacon* cautioned the people against them."

"Mr. Cobb was in no way to blame nor responsible for the unfortunate circumstances that followed the visit of the circus here, and no one regretted them more deeply than he," reported the *Sumner County Press*, Wellington, October 1. "He is a gentleman from head to foot, generous and kind, and the last man to sanction wrong doing in anyone."

Despite his mortification, Willis Cobb stayed with the show through the season and the next year, 1892, went out with Cook & Whitby's Colossal English Circus, Museum and Menagerie Allied with America's Racing Association, a new name which Ben Wallace hid behind for the next two seasons. There was gambling on Cook & Whitby, but Wallace kept it under control and there were no incidents that remotely approached the caper at Wellington.

Willis Cobb disappeared from the Kansas scene after the season of 1893, with Cook & Whitby. Wallace returned to Kansas year after year giving a good show, drawing large crowds and making a buck on the side, but he never forgot the lessons of 1891.

In all the confusion of 1891, the center of the storm, Lewis White, disappeared completely.

Research funded in part by grants from:

Wolfe's Camera Shops, Inc., Topeka, Kansas
First National Bank of Topeka, Kansas

The Beginning of the Great Wallace Circus

By Karl H. Hartisch

One hundred years ago, on Saturday, April 26, 1884, Benjamin E. Wallace and his partner James A. Anderson put Peru, Indiana on the map as a circus city. Their newly organized show, Wallace & Co's Great World's Menagerie & Grand International Circus, Alliance of Novelties & Mardi Gras Street Carnival, presented its initial performance at the local show grounds. The length of the title pointed out that owners in those years felt the larger the title, the larger the size of the show loomed in the public mind.

This is not to imply that the show was small as seldom if ever did Ben Wallace do anything in a small way. It was a one ring overland show, but it was not considered small for an operation of that type. The show used 59 wagons consisting of 26 equipment wagons, 7 performers' wagons, 4 table wagon, a ticket wagon, a band wagon, a steam calliope, and 18 cages. One wagon traveled ahead of the show on the advance. It moved overland by teams of mules, and they, along with the performing horses and ponies, numbered 185 head. The payroll was reported to have listed 150 persons.

In the course of the two years the show was being framed much interest was generated in Peru and Miami County as both weekly newspapers

MENAGERIE AND CIRCUS.
THE TIME IS NEAR!
PREPARE FOR IT! WAIT FOR IT!
WALLACE & CO'S
World's Menagerie,
International Circus, Alliance of Novelties, and
Indian Village of Wild Comanches.
— WILL EXHIBIT AT —
LEBANON, SATURDAY, May 10, 1884.

The
Bloom
of
Brilliant
Perfection!



Living
Wild
Animals
in Open
Dens!

The Sacred Elephant Malichi!
A Convocation of Giant Actors, the Big Monkey and Pong Circus, a Grand International Council of Earth's Undisputed Aerial Celebrities!
A Glorious Vision of Radiant Light! Rare and Beautiful Scenes! A Grand Representation of Human Events! A School of Beauty! An Avalanche of Delightful Amusement! A Grand Double Company of Men in an Immense Double Ring! Two acts simultaneously!
Primarily Trials of Speed!

100 STAR PERFORMERS! 100
in France, Primarily Trial of Ring Horses, 20 Lilliputian Pongies, 20 White-Crowned Pongies, 20 German, American, English, French, Italian Clowns.
A whole tribe of Wild Comanches Indians camped on the show grounds, showing their manner of living in their native wilds. Grand outdoor Exhibition of Kicks and Tomahawk Throwing, Lancing Human Targets, Wild and Thrilling Indian Shows of the Hand, War Dance, Death Dance, the Blood-Curdling Representations of an Indian Warrior, Squaw and Pongies, the aged Sachems, Lone Wolf, the beautiful Princess, M. P. & L. A. the Indian Captain, the Sun Dance, the Bear Spitting, a whole Indian Village of 200 Indians, the Indian Life in all its phases. You will never see anything like it again. You never saw anything like it before. All children of all nations will love it. All sportsmen will love it. All lovers of the circus will love it. All lovers of the circus will love it. All lovers of the circus will love it.
A levy of bands filling the air with sweet music. A martial triumphant entry. The sound of cannon. Unparalleled excitement. A band, a pipe, a drum—a cyclone of splendor free on the public highway, the crowning edifice.
Come Early! Buy all day! Load the Dais! Remember! Read our Bill, read our Newspapers, speak of the show, talk of the date, prepare for the event, note the name.
Lebanon, Saturday, May 10, 1884.

Another 1884 newspaper ad showed two polar bears mauling a hunter, an illustration which apparently had nothing to do with the circus. Ad from the Lebanon (Ohio) *Patriot*, May 9, 1884. John Polacsek Collection.

newspaper ads appeared. A listing of the various types of acts and performers was accompanied by a listing of the animals in the menagerie. It then listed the school of brute actors which performed with large lettered type mentioning Malichi the elephant. No circus of this era was respectable if it didn't own an elephant.

The ad stated that the gigantic street procession took place at 10 A.M., and immediately upon the return to the lot a free demonstration of rope walking was given. The doors of the museum opened at 11 A.M., and the menagerie at 1 P.M., permitting plenty of time to view the animals before the performance began at 2 P.M. Doors opened at 7 P.M. for the night show, and the price of admission was 50¢ and 25¢.

News accounts stated the parade was a lavish affair, and, even though the farmers were busy with their spring planting, it was estimated that 5000 people witnessed it. Peru's own brass band led the parade as a special

honor to the local show. At various intervals along the route three circus brass bands and a drum corp provided additional music. The horses were the finest ever viewed in such a procession, and all personnel were elegantly costumed.

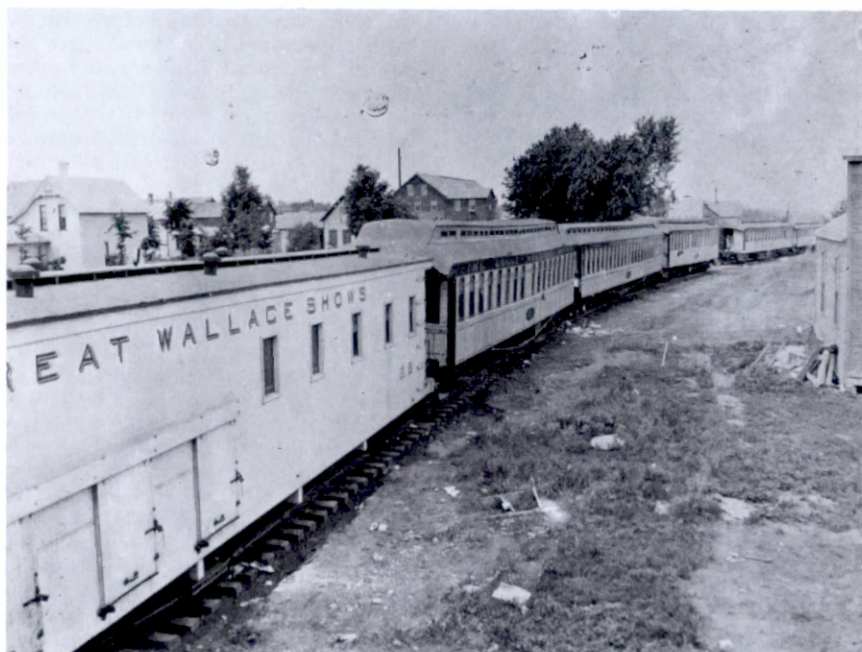
The matinee performance was a full house with standing room only, and additional seating was required to permit the crowd to be seated right up to the ring curb at the night show. It was estimated that 300 persons had to be turned away in spite of the extra seating.



Benjamin E. Wallace, born October 14, 1847, died April 8, 1921. He served in the Union Army during the Civil War, after which he went to work in a livery stable in Peru, Indiana. Pfening Archives.

A review of the program pointed out that the menagerie was not quite up to par. The reporter down played this fact, stating that most patrons attended a circus to view the performance rather than view the animals. He also noted that some of the performing horses were not used to either a brass band or a large audience, and that they became skittish and unruly. Other than these comments no further criticism was offered.

The performance offered a variety of acts, but the equestrian turns created the most interest. In those days horses



LEBANON, SATURDAY, MAY 10th.

THE TIME IS NEAR!

PREPARE FOR IT! WAIT FOR IT!

WALLACE & CO'S WORLD'S MENAGERIE! INTERNATIONAL CIRCUS,

ALLIANCE OF NOVELTIES, AND INDIAN VILLAGE OF WILD COMANCHES.



THE BLOOM OF BRILLIANT PERFECTION!

LIVING WILD ANIMALS IN OPEN DENS,

The Sacred Elephant, "Malichi."

An Open Den of Performing Panthers! An Open Den of Performing Lions!

An Open Den of Grave-Robbing, Ghoulish Hyenas! Trained Elks!

Trained Elephants! Trained Bears! More Trained Animals than Was Ever Seen!

UNDISPUTED ARENIC CELEBRITIES!

A Glorifying Vision of Radiant Light!

Rare and Heptuous Scenes! A Grand Requisition of Roman Revels! A Shower of Beauty! An Avalanche of Surprises! A Great Double Company of Stars in an Immense Double Ring! Two Acts Simultaneously! Friendly Trials of Skill!

100-STAR PERFORMERS!-100

40-Francing, Princely, Trained Ring Horses-40.

20-Litigious Ponies-20. 6-White-Crowned Funny Fools-6.

German, American, English, French and Italian Clowns!

A whole lot of WILD COMANCHES! THE INDIANS camped on the show grounds, showing their manner of living in their native wilds. Grand outdoor exhibition of kalls and tomahawks, throwing and tossing human beings. Wild and thrilling Indian scenes of the hunt, war dances, death dances.

The silent-curving representations of an Indian massacre. Squaws and papooses. The aged and young. (One kill). The beautiful Princess. Mamma S.A.L.A. The Indian regalia. The sun dance. The bear hunting. A whole Indian village of wigwags and moccasins. Indian life in all its phases. You will never see anything like it again. You never saw anything like it before.

An Alliance of All Earth's Novelties!

The Wild Spotted Leopard Man, the Fiji Cannibals, the Wild Patagonians, the Julas, and ten thousand other awe-inspiring wonders.

A BEVY OF BANDS FILLING THE AIR WITH SWEETEST MUSIC.

A martial triumphant entry. The scene of excellence. Unquelled scenes of enchantment. A flood of light, a deluge of splendor flow on the path of glory. The crowning climax.

COME EARLY! STAY ALL DAY! READ THE DATE! REMEMBER IT!

Read our bills, read our newspapers, speak of the show, talk of the date, prepare for the event.

While the show was new, Wallace's press writer was obviously a veteran. Ad from the Lebanon (Ohio) Gazette, May 3, 1884. John Polacsek Collection.

were the prime form of transportation so interest in such acts was only natural, and most shows featured riding acts. Mme. Wombold was the principle lady bareback rider, and was also a four horse Roman rider. Mlle. Gussi Lowanda was a bareback rider, and Tilda Field rode menage. Marcus Leon rode bareback, and his brother, Dan Leon, was a four horse rider who also rode over various types of hurdles. James Kincaid was the principle male rider, and presented a somersaulting pad act, and a bounding jockey riding act.

Another news story stated that a Mr. Sells of the Sells Bros. Circus, a large railroad show, was a guest of the management. He was quoted as saying, "Once the Wallace Show becomes established with the public it soon will be giving competition to the best of them." The account closed with a statement by the reporter that the management should buy a tent large enough to hold the populace of Miami County next year. While that was a figure of speech, once the show began its tour the crowds continued to be of such numbers that the tent was enlarged.

It is doubtful that anyone present that day, including Ben Wallace himself, realized that the launching of this show was the start of Wallace's 29 years as a circus owner, and another 7 years as a dealer in animals and outdoor show equipment. In time, the name of Wallace was associated with a title that to this day is considered one of the most valuable in the history of the American circus.

The beginning of this show was also the start of 70 years of continuous circus activity in and nearby the town of Peru, Indiana.

The Development of the Railroad Circus

By Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

Part Three

The 1873 Train

The most significant account describing the 1873 train confirms the existence of the flat car loading method associated with W.C. Coup and the Barnum circus. The June 13, 1873 Lowell (Ma.) *Weekly Journal* reported "the loading is done in a systematic and quiet manner, the wagons being drawn on in procession, the first [wagon] being drawn through the entire train of open cars and the others follow afterwards."¹¹⁴ The writer was describing the process of placing the first wagon upon the first car of a string of flats and then being drawn across the other cars to the traveling position at the far end of the line. This report is the earliest known account of the end loading method. What remains to be found is a description of the "perfect system of ropes and runs, strong but simple in their arrangement" which was remarked upon in the July 11, 1882 Lewiston (Me.) *Evening Journal*. Even though the 1873 Barnum show employed the end loading method to fill some of the flats, it still gilleed a portion of the properties from the train to the lot. The show train included "flat cars without sides, for the poles, seating lumber, etc.; flat cars with low sides for wagons and cages . . . [and] box cars for canvas."¹¹⁵

The March 22, 1873 *New York Times* reported that "55 platform cars [are] being built at Bergen to the order of Mr. Barnum . . . and from Cleveland, Ohio a number of palace cars for 300 horses." Why the Gill cars of 1872 were replaced is not known. Perhaps the quantity of 55 was an exaggeration, or included cars which were receiving a maintenance check. Corroborating the new cars' existence, at least circumstantially by numbers, are five reports delineating the train's size. All of these reports place the train in the range of 62 to 65 cars, of which 50 odd cars were show owned, the balance furnished by the railroad upon which the show was traveling. The single breakdown of the train consist listed five sleepers, two passenger cars and the balance in "gondolas and freight" cars.¹¹⁶

Since it has been established that Coup acquired two palace stock cars from McNairy & Claflen of Cleveland in 1872, the same city specified as the source of the new 1873 stocks, it is likely the firm also furnished the 1873

cars.¹¹⁷ The source of the flat cars is more obscure. The only car shop in Bergen, New Jersey, which was incorporated into Jersey City in 1871, was William Cummings & Son of West Bergen, owned by William H. and Luther Cummings.¹¹⁸ The May 1873 *National Car Builder* noted the Cummings firm had just completed 22 cars for the Barnum show, the 55 figure cited earlier possibly referring to the total number of flats. By 1874 the Cummings firm had slid into bankruptcy, but it furnished additional cars that year to a circus, possibly Barnum's, and during the winter of 1878-1879 the Barnum show stored their rail cars in the former Cummings shop.¹¹⁹

Barnum's challenge ad in the April 18, 1873 *Clipper* claimed he had "nearly, if not quite, double the number of cars of my own (besides those hired from the railroads) that are used by any two traveling shows." The next largest show, either the Great Eastern on 41 cars, or L.B. Lent's, were considerably smaller than the Barnum show, but it is interesting to learn that part of the 1873 train was still leased.¹²⁰ This admission partially discredits a "wait" article in the May 10, 1873 Jackson (Mi.) *Daily Citizen* which claimed "Barnum always uses his own cars."

Palace Stock Cars

The circus has always been fair game for animal protectionist crus-

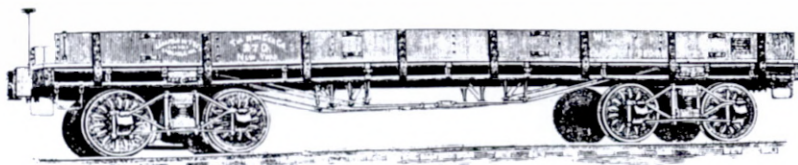
The LaMothe metal frame flats built for the 1876 Barnum show were similar to this circa 1888 tubular frame car, presumably built under a license from LaMothe. Note that it has only two levels of longitudinal members, as compared to three shown in the Barnum litho.

saders who allege that circus' treatment of animals is inhumane. Even the great Barnum was not immune to these attacks. Henry Bergh, the founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, often took the showman to task for the handling of his show's stock. To the troupe's credit, it was the first show to employ "palace" stock cars in lieu of conventional stock or "cattle" cars, which was the term used to specify the stock cars on the 1874 John Robinson show.¹²¹ The Barnum show publicized the use of the palace cars, the only ones on a circus, in a full page ad published in the April 19, 1873 *Clipper*, advising they were used to carry the show's valuable ring stock. The use of these cars, or similar ones, continued through 1876, when the show claimed the cars were constructed with commodious stalls in which the horses could lie down and rest during the journey, arriving at the next site fresh for the performance.

Typical stock cars owned by railroads or meat packing firms were simply covered pens, lacking segregation or isolation facilities, feeding apparatus, etc., the stock being fed and watered at prearranged facilities along the route. Studies undertaken in the 1880's indicated that livestock on a 2000 mile trip lost 10% of their weight, a loss reduced by 65% with the use of palace stock cars.¹²² Similar treatment of circus horses extended their useful careers while assuring they would be in the best possible condition for each day's performance. Baggage stock were not segregated in separate stalls as were the ring stock, but were packed close together to prevent the lineup from collapsing in the event of a sudden train motion.¹²³ To stop kick-

THE IRON CAR COMPANY,
115 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

MANUFACTURERS AND LESSORS OF



HIGH CLASS FREIGHT CARS.

Capacity, 60,000 lbs. and upwards.

HIGHEST STRENGTH and MOST DURABLE CARS ever built. Thousands in successful operation on leading railroads.

TERMS OF LEASE: One Cent per mile, with guaranteed minimum mileage of 8,000 miles per annum.

For fuller information and photographs apply to

THE IRON CAR COMPANY, 115 Broadway, New York.



The first metal cars for circus use were built in 1876 by the National Tube Works under a license from Bernard J. LaMothe. The artist showed only two wagons on each car, but it is likely they were long enough to hold three. Ron Richards collection.

ing and biting, the baggage stock were fitted with short halters to keep their heads fastened close to the feed bin.

The Barnum Hippodrome

There were two Barnum shows in 1874 and 1875. P.T. Barnum's World's traveling Fair, an overland circus, was managed by John V. "Pogey" O'Brien. The P.T. Barnum Great Roman Hippodrome, a traveling version of the affair which opened in a wood and canvas structure in New York, was guided by W.C. Coup. Due to the time required to construct the enclosures in which it appeared on the road, the hippodrome show could not make daily moves. It traveled an abbreviated route of only five cities, playing extended engagements in wood and canvas hippodromes which had been specially constructed prior to the show's arrival.

The September 27, 1874 Pittsburgh, (Pa.) *Evening Chronicle* reported the show arrived in town on several trains, but no mention was made of the number of cars or ownership. With the big top replaced by a pre-constructed structure and the route reduced to five engagements, the justification to operate a complete circus train evaporated. It is suspected that the Barnum show traveled either aboard leased cars in 1874, or possibly on a reduced number of its own cars. In either case, the 1872-1873 railroad car purchases became excess assets and are believed to have been sold to system railroads or leasing firms. This theory is partially confirmed by a lease the show exercised in 1875.

The 1874 hippodrome show was not an economic triumph, and the operation reverted back to a one day stand

tented operation in 1875. The show still differed from a true circus by presenting hippodrome races in lieu of acts. The daily street parade was reportedly a marching band followed by jockeys on their racehorses. Canvas amphitheaters were still constructed in each town, probably on a smaller and less elaborate scale than 1874. Six car loads of patented seats for the reserves were dispatched in advance of each date to permit their erection prior to the show's arrival.¹²⁴

The use of a special train was again required in 1875 and this time the need was fulfilled by the rental of cars from the United States Rolling Stock Company (USRSC). There were between fifty and sixty cars in the train, each emblazoned with the "P.T. Barnum's Hippodrome" title according to one account written early in the season.¹²⁵ Another report issued later in the season by the show contradicted this story. It claimed the show traveled on 65 cars comprised of three Pullman sleepers, 12 passenger cars and 45 freight cars. The freight cars, which would have been box, stock and flat cars, were allegedly sixty feet long, specified as being double the usual length. No corroboration for this description has been found, but it remains the earliest known report of sixty foot cars being used by a circus. The overall size of this train would nominally appear to have been twice the actual size required to transport the show.¹²⁶

The U.S. Rolling Stock Co.

The USRSC was the firm which supplied virtually all of the leased circus trains of the 1870's and 1880's. Founded in Chicago in 1871 as a rolling stock rental firm, it did not build its own cars until the late 1870's, contracting the work to established car builders. It was organized to supply cars to the broad gauge Atlantic & Great Western Railroad and other lines, by 1874 owning 105 locomotives and 4,048 cars.¹²⁷ The prosperous business in leased cars led to the opening of a branch in Urbana, Ohio,



This detail from the 1876 Barnum train lithograph led to the discovery of the first circus owned metal cars. Note the construction of the frame, long horizontal members connected by vertical strapping. Print courtesy Richard Flint.

which was probably the source of one train leased to the John Robinson circus. The late Richard E. Conover located a now lost issue of the 1906 Urbana, Ohio, *Daily Times Citizen* in which John F. Robinson stated that the first circus train was built by an Urbana firm. There is no evidence that the USRSC supplied any cars to a circus prior to the 1875 Barnum show, so the intent and accuracy of Robinson's statement is open to question. Indeed, the Urbana plant could not have supplied cars to the 1872 Barnum show, as it did not exist until 1875.¹²⁸ Trains leased by the USRSC included those of the following shows: 1875 P.T. Barnum, 1877-1878 Howes Great London, 1878 Sells Bros., 1880 Great Pacific, and 1884 Burr Robbins.¹²⁹ It later built several cars for showmen, including two fifty foot flats for W.C. Coup and an advertising car for W.W. Cole in 1881.¹³⁰ The extent of the USRSC's circus business by 1879 was such that Adam Forepaugh claimed the firm supplied all of the circus trains used by his competitors, he alone building and owning his own cars.¹³¹

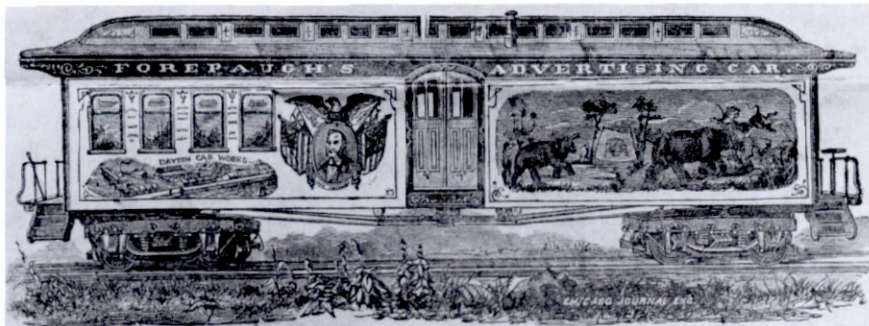
The Flatfoot Era

The Barnum and Coup partnership was dissolved at the end of the 1875 tour. Some writers have pointed to Barnum's leasing of his name to second rate operators as creating friction between the partners, but this action finds no confirmation in contemporary accounts as a cause for the split.¹³² Coup said his health was quite poor at the time, the overworked manager probably suffering from the same type of stress which led to James A. Bailey's near nervous breakdown in 1885.¹³³ Another account says the show had problems for several years,

attributing the difficulties to the adoption of the hippodrome format in lieu of the typical circus setup. Coup reportedly tried to slip out of the partnership several times, but was prevented from doing so by Barnum, who acknowledged the value of Coup's "pluck and sagacity."¹³⁴ Coup and Barnum liquidated the firm by means of an extensive auction held in late November. Although their ad in the *Clipper* claimed the sale would include "all the railroad cars, palace, stock and double length gondolas built expressly for the business," the catalog of the sale lists only thirteen vehicles, comprising 9 Long Flat Cars, 1 Elephant Car, 2 Palace Stock Cars, and 1 Side-show Car.¹³⁵ The small number of cars offered at the sale indicates the extent of leased cars on the 1875 train. It is unlikely that any cars were held out of the sale, the extensive catalog listings indicating the entire show was placed upon the auction block.

None of the accounts of the Barnum show sale disclose who purchased the cars. Attendees actively bid the older traps and fittings, but, according to a report in the December 22, 1875 *Cleveland Herald*, bidding was somewhat restrained on the more valuable assets. The word was out that these properties were going to be bid upon by certain interested parties. We suspect they were Barnum's new partners, Avery Smith, John J. Nathans, and George F. Bailey, the last of the group of New York showmen known as the Flatfoots. Even if they purchased the thirteen cars offered at the sale, an additional forty cars were required to carry the 1876 show. It is known that arrangements were made for the construction of half that number, with the balance possibly leased from the USRSC.

Early in 1876 the *New York Times* announced Barnum owned 120 railroad cars, a gross exaggeration typical of the pre-season announcements press agents commonly distributed to reporters.¹³⁶ This number was exceeded two months later by another account in the March 27, 1876 *Harper's Weekly* which claimed 150 cars had been constructed to haul the show. Fortunately one of the members of the 1876 show, a candy butcher who later became a Forepaugh protege and established a reputation as a hard luck showman because of his numerous failures, recalled some details of the 1876 train. Frank A. Robbins' recollection in the March 19, 1910 *Billboard* indicated the 1876 train had 45 cars, the stocks and flats measuring 32 feet long and having a capacity of 20,000 pounds. The sleepers were forty and fifty feet in length. Robbins provided a valuable insight by observing the show was equivalent to a 20 car show of 1910, a time when 60 foot wooden cars were the rule.



Adam Forepaugh fielded one of the earliest pictorial advertising cars, an 1877 creation of the Barney & Smith firm of Dayton, Ohio. The car, shown here in an 1884 Forepaugh letterhead, later served on the Buffalo Bill Wild West in the late 1890's.

The LaMothe Flats

As stated previously, the Barnum show placed a contract for the construction of a number of new cars for 1876. A view of the new vehicles is provided by a colorful lithograph which appeared on the cover of the November-December 1883 *Bandwagon*. While some of it can be dismissed as typical show business exaggeration, it is evident that the artist saw the cars, or at least had knowledge of them, before he commenced the piece. The flat cars he showed were mounted on two wooden beam trucks of four wheels each, typical of period freight cars. The cars are of unusual construction, having a side profile of several longitudinal members connected by vertical risers, a construction which will be explored shortly. Each car has low sides fitted on top of the deck, qualifying the cars to be called gondolas. The show utilized the advertising space available on these sideboards, lettering them "P.T. Barnum's Gondola," the earliest known visual confirmation of a practice which was employed as long as circuses used flat cars.

In the middle of each car was a plaque reading "LaMothe Mfg. Co. Patented 1875," a representation of a builder's plate. Bernard J. LaMothe, a proponent of metal passenger cars in the 1850's and 1860's, turned his attention to the manufacture of metal freight cars after his passenger car ventures failed.¹³⁷ LaMothe's design involved the use of longitudinal round or tubular members fastened together with metal straps and cast intersection blocks. Comparison of his passenger car patent drawings to the rectangular lattice construction of the cars in the 1876 Barnum litho reveals he employed the same basic type of construction for the flat car frames. The superstructure of the passenger car was eliminated, with a wooden deck built upon the metal frame. The

1876 Barnum show ads justifiably called attention to their new conveyances, giving the "three monster special trains of solid steel cars" second billing only to the show's title.¹³⁸ No other amusement concern is known to have built steel frame cars until 1911, thirty five years after the Barnum show purchase. These were sixty foot stock cars manufactured by the Pressed Steel Car Co. for the Pawnee Bill-Buffalo Bill Wild West.¹³⁹

Why the Barnum show partners chose to build these metal cars is not known. Their price was probably not cheap and their delivery was likely to take longer than conventional cars. Barnum himself has provided the most logical explanation for their existence, advising his friend Samuel Clemens on March 20, 1876 that the new steel cars would resist being smashed or telescoped in a wreck, at least the second time Barnum had expressed concern about the hazards of railroad circusing.¹⁴⁰

One would not expect circus owners to be experts at railroad car construction except when it came to aspects that affected show operation. The ability of flat cars to accept circus wagons was of prime importance, and it is in this respect that LaMothe's 1875 patent offered an improvement. The only U.S. Patent issued to LaMothe in 1875 was No. 170,480, granted on November 30, 1875, covering a peculiar transom beam, the piece which connects one truck sideframe to the other. Normal transom beams were made of wood, mounted below the car floor framework. They were often notched to allow the wood floor beams space and clearance, resulting in reduced strength. LaMothe's transom beam was a hollow rectangular section, made of iron. The superior strength of the iron member allowed its sides to be penetrated by the longitudinal frame members, effectively allowing the car frame, and thus the deck, to be located closer to the railhead. The position of the transom beam in relation to the car frame can be seen in the lithograph, the ends of the beam being shown between the third and fourth vertical members from the end of the car frame. The decreasing of the deck to railhead

distance meant an increase in the allowable height of vehicles loaded on the cars. This was an advantage for the circus man who tried to load overland wagons with large carriage wheels, telescoping tableaux and other high loads. The height problem was significant, two cases being recorded in the 1870's of overhead bridges or other obstructions throwing wagons off the cars, resulting in the death of animals and men, and equipment destruction.¹⁴¹

The show continued using the solid steel trains theme in their 1877 newspaper ads.¹⁴² During the latter part of the season, an unidentified manager provided a testimonial letter to the National Tube Works Company, a licensee of LaMothe's, concerning the metal cars. The letter, signed P.T. Barnum & Co., noted the National firm had supplied the show with 18 wrought iron cars which had been in continuous use since April 1, 1876. The writer stated they were lighter than the best available wooden cars the show owned, carrying their loads easier and requiring absolutely no maintenance, a contrast to the constant attention required by the wooden cars. They performed satisfactorily over the many railroads the show traveled, sustaining greater abuse than system owned cars, and were acknowledged by trainmen to be among the best cars they ever handled. The show had recently lost an advance car in a wreck, and the show manager was of the opinion that the destruction due to the accident would have been considerably less had it been a LaMothe car. It was boldly announced that an iron car would replace it, but this plan was not realized.¹⁴³ Despite such laudatory remarks, the cars remained part of the Barnum train only through 1880.

The Forepaugh Train

Although he contracted for several long distance jumps by rail from the late 1860's to the middle 1870's, Adam Forepaugh did not become a railroad circus owner until 1877, when he

bought what may have been the first complete train built for circus use.¹⁴⁴ Barney & Smith's Dayton Car Works in Dayton, Ohio, furnished Forepaugh with a set of 30 cars, comprised of seven stock cars, 18 flat cars, one baggage and oil car, one dining car, two sleepers and one advertising car. The stocks and flats were forty feet long, the advertising car forty five feet and the sleepers fifty-five feet long. The sleeping accommodations in one car consisted of berths only, the second car having both berths and state-rooms.¹⁴⁵ Frank Robbins indicated the freight cars were rated at 30,000 pounds capacity.¹⁴⁶ Although the total number of cars was less than that of the Barnum show, it is noteworthy that Forepaugh did not provide sleeping cars for all employees, and his cars were five to ten feet longer than those on the Barnum show. There is one railroad circus innovation which may be credited to Forepaugh. His 1877 dining car is probably the same one referred to as a hotel and dining car in 1879, from which he intended to do his own catering. It is the earliest discovered reference to a vehicle which was later nicknamed the pie car. Claim to the first privilege car was assigned to John A. Barton in his obituary in the December 17, 1921 *Billboard*. He was said to have originated it on the Frank A. Robbins show, placing the event no earlier than 1881, the same year the Sells Bros. train included a privilege car.¹⁴⁷ George W. Hall, in the June 24, 1922 *Billboard*, indicated one car in the Great Eastern's 1872 leased train carried only the privilege people, the grifters who operated the show's many games of chance. Perhaps this is the origin of the term privilege car.

Advance Cars

Another Coup claim which remains

In 1891, the Adam Forepaugh circus was still using the advertising car which Barney & Smith built for the show in 1877. Pfening Archives.

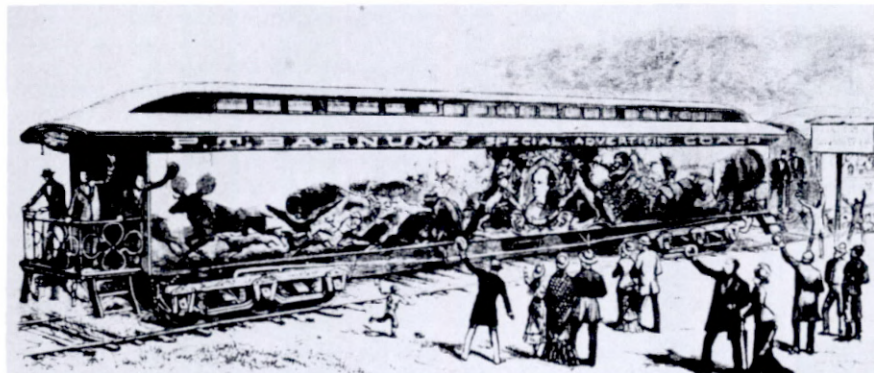
to be substantiated is that he owned, in conjunction with his participation in the Barnum show, the first railway advertising car.¹⁴⁸ Railroad advertising cars were common by the late 1870's, but the "first" in this line has not been definitively established. Advance men traveling by wagon could hardly keep pace with a show moving by rail, and it is anticipated additional research will reveal the adoption of railroad based advance corps in the early 1870's, possibly employing system cars in the beginning. Coup recorded that the advance cars were the most expensive vehicles in the circus train, costing between \$3000 and \$7000, the latter figure being the reported price of an 1881 W.W. Cole car.¹⁴⁹

An 1884 letterhead depicts what is believed to be the advertising car built for Adam Forepaugh by the Barney & Smith firm of Dayton, Ohio in 1877 as part of Forepaugh's first train. This vehicle is the first circus advance car of which a pictorial record has been found. Photographs of the car on the Forepaugh show in the 1890's, and later on the Buffalo Bill Wild West, verify the accuracy of the letterhead engraving and provide the earliest known view of a circus advance car. One reporter who toured it in 1880 noted the car carried a small printing press, used for "striking off small dodgers, putting in datelines, etc.," duties generally contracted to the local newspaper or printer to establish goodwill and secure free advertising in the local paper.¹⁵⁰

The loss of one of Barnum's advance cars in a terrible wreck near Altoona, Iowa on August 29, 1877 gave the show an opportunity to replace it with a new one.¹⁵¹ The management turned to Barney & Smith to build the new car, apparently having been impressed with the product they had turned out for Adam Forepaugh the year before. Out of their works rolled a 62 foot long modified system baggage car with solid unpainted sides. The art work was applied in New York, the car's destination when it was shipped in January 1878.

The sides of other pictorial cars were punctuated by doors and windows, but no penetrations were allowed in the sides of the Barnum car, yielding two moving billboards measuring about eight feet high and over fifty feet long. To execute the car's exterior artwork the show retained James Walker (1819-1889), a painter best known at the time for his panoramic paintings of the Civil War battlefields at Gettysburg and Lookout Mountain. From 1857 to 1862 he was occupied with a government commission to paint a record of the battle of Chapultepec for the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C.¹⁵² Prior to this work, Walker was employed as a car





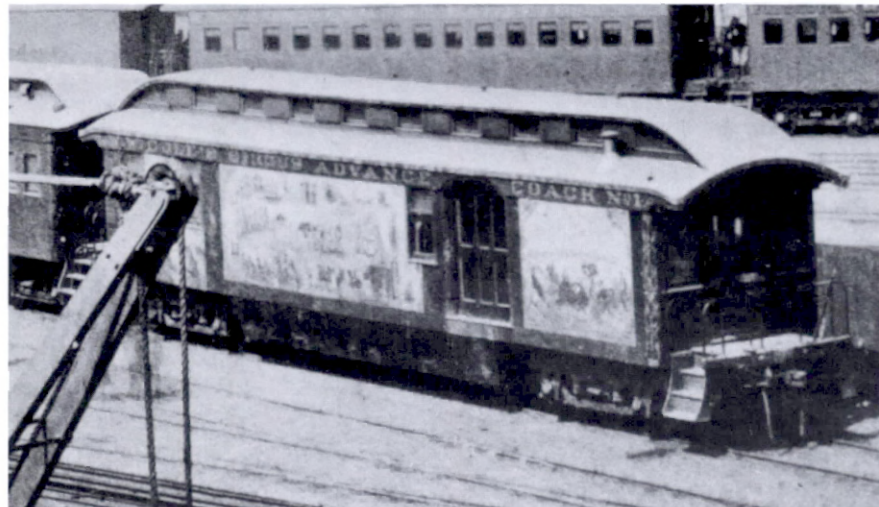
painter at one of the car builder's shops.¹⁵³ Walker's work is noted for its color, attention to detail and lifelike qualities. All of these elements were present in his paintings on the Barnum advertising car. Contemporary accounts called the car "the greatest and handsomest advertising car in existence" and observed that "nothing of its kind has ever been seen here before." Walker's experience in painting enormous battlefield canvases prepared him for his task and he executed what must be one of the finest pieces of circus artwork ever conceived.

In the center of each side was a monumental portrait of Barnum himself, flanked on either side by the attractions of his enterprise. One half of one side was devoted to the representation of a procession of exotic animals, including elephants and camels, elegantly decorated and under the gaze of their uniformed attendants. The other half depicted the show's group of trained horses, the famed Trakene stallions. No illustrations of this side of the car have been found, but the decorations on the other side of the car were preserved for posterity by an engraving in the July 27, 1878 issue of *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Magazine*. This side was one vast panoramic view, broken only by

The finest artwork ever to grace a railroad car is an appropriate claim for the paintings rendered by James Walker on the 1878 Barnum advertising car. Existing examples of Walker's work suggest the car was extremely colorful and very lifelike.

Barnum's portrait. Walker filled it with scenes of the animal kingdom of the torrid, temperate and frigid zones, a number of scenes consisting primarily of carnivores dispatching their next meal. On the ends of the car Walker painted birds of colorful plumage, including parrots, condors and several examples of Australian birds. Lacking side openings, the car was lighted and ventilated by screens and monitors in the roof. The interior was outfitted by the New York firm of A.T. Stewart & Co., and featured the black walnut furniture of the period. The interior was divided into five areas, including baggage and washrooms, an

Photographs of the W.W. Cole circus are among the rarest of large shows of the 1870's and 1880's. This c.1880 view shows the Cole advance car in the yard adjacent to the San Francisco depot of the Southern Pacific Railroad. It sported a fine pictorial paint job featuring various arenic scenes. Courtesy California Historical Society.



office, a drawing room and a work area with long counters, below which were storage drawers, then said to be carrying five tons of advertising material. On the opposite side was a built-in seat within which the billposters' tools were stored. Starch for paste, and a boiler for heating water were also located under the counter. The drawing room was carpeted with Axminster whereas the remaining floor was covered with oil cloth. It departed New York on May 4, 1878, and generally traveled from 10 to 14 days ahead of the show.¹⁵⁴

Pictorial advertising cars very quickly became an accepted form of advance vehicle. The Great London circus, the Sells Brothers, W.W. Cole and other shows soon built colorful advance cars.¹⁵⁵ They proved so effective the Barnum show fielded three in 1881.¹⁵⁶ The practice continued among the smaller circuses into the 1910's, by which time such decoration had been discontinued by the bigger shows.

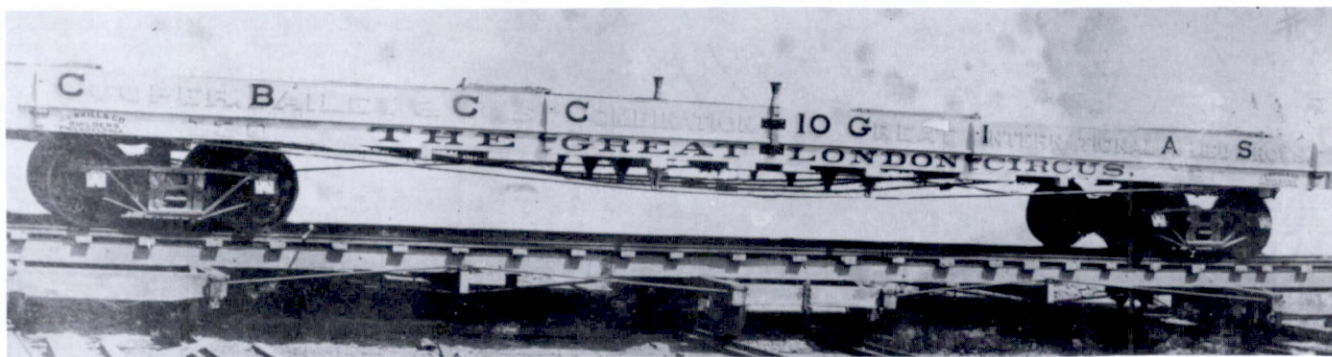
Two of the John Robinson circus' advertising cars were unique. Their 1881 car had lettering executed in luminous paint which could be read in the dark.¹⁵⁷ Around 1900 the show toured what is believed to have been the only advance car decorated with wood carvings.

An unusual feature of the advance cars used by both the Great London and Barnum circuses was a steam calliope, located either on the roof or in a side opening compartment. Except for their presence on the cars beginning in 1880, little is known of these obscure instruments other than that the Barnum & Bailey show quit the practice in 1890.¹⁵⁸ In 1880 W.C. Coup equipped one of his advance cars with "an enormous organ of far reaching power," presumably a steam calliope. A second Coup car was fitted with a large single steam whistle to disturb the peace.¹⁵⁹

The Final Flatfoot Years

The Barnum show train size increased to an even fifty cars for the 1877 tour, according to the route book. The 1878 route book placed the train at 52 cars, and the 1879 book recorded 51 cars. The press was given an inflated figure of 75 to 82 cars in 1878.¹⁶⁰ Figures for 1880 are lacking, although it is probable the Flatfoots kept the show at the 50 car level in their last year.

In August 1880, before the tour was over, Barnum signed an agreement with two new partners for 1881. Perhaps Bailey and Nathans had expressed a desire to Barnum to retire from the business, but it is just as likely Barnum realized his old line partners were being outclassed by younger showmen, and sought to rejuvenate the show with some new



blood. Whatever the reason, Barnum formed a partnership with James A. Bailey and James L. Hutchinson, who along with James E. Cooper, had been the principals in the Great London Circus, a 56 car operation which rivaled the Barnum show in both size and splendor.¹⁶¹

The Great London Train

The Cooper & Bailey show first went on rails in 1876, the March 25, 1876 *Clipper* placing it on 43 cars. Newspaper ads from that year placed in on 42 cars, the difference possibly being the advertising car. The cars were left at San Francisco during the subsequent two year tour of the South Seas and South America. Upon the show's return the train was sent to Philadelphia to begin the 1879 tour. Ads from that season placed the train size at 54 cars, making it the equal of the 52 car Barnum show. It was billed by two cars in advance, for a total of 56 cars.¹⁶² Cooper & Bailey obtained possession of the physical assets of the Howes Great London show upon their return, but the acquisition included only a couple of rail cars. The Howes show traveled on a train leased from the U.S. Rolling Stock Co., which repossessed it in January 1877 with \$9,777 due on the bill.¹⁶³

The year 1879 proved to be a prosperous one for the show, enabling it to finance the construction of a string of new cars for the 1880 tour. No record of the order has been found in the trade journals or the show's route book, but the surviving builder's photographs and order book are irrefutable evidence that the cars were built. The archives of the J.G. Brill Company of Philadelphia indicate they constructed nine cars for the show. It is believed the cars were built for Cooper and Bailey rather than for the U.S. Rolling Stock Company, which would have leased them to the showmen.

The Brill photographs are extremely valuable because they can be positively dated and depict the "state of the art" construction of each type of special freight car used by railroad circuses. The Brill order book shows the cars were ordered between January 8

The system of inclined planes and ropes used to load and unload flat cars was perfected by the time Brill built this run car for the 1880 Great London Circus. Note the snubber post in the middle of the car. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

and January 20, 1880, and deliveries scheduled between March 10 and 25, 1880.¹⁶⁴ Tying the order books to the photographs is the title on the advance car, "Great London Circus & Sanger's Royal British Menagerie, United With The Great International Ten Allied Shows," a variation used only in the show's 1880 newspaper ads.

The animal and flat cars were equipped with four wheel trucks, as were conventional freight cars. The advertising car, a modified system combination car, was mounted on six wheel trucks, which followed traditional railroad practice. The cars had hand brakes and multiple slot link and pin couplers to facilitate coupling to cars with different coupler heights.

The most important conclusion reached after studying these photographs is that after only eight years circus cars achieved the forms they would retain until the introduction of steel cars thirty years later. Two of the vehicles, the stock and elephant cars, were ordered as duplicates of sample cars. If these unidentified samples were other circus cars, it would indicate the designs for two types of circus cars were rationalized by 1879. It is also significant that none of the features incorporated in the cars were patented by the Brill firm. The order book records the lengths of the stock and flat cars as fifty feet, that of the advertising car as sixty feet. A comparison of the bull car to the others indicates it was shorter, possibly 46 feet. Contemporary system cars of similar application measured slightly less than forty feet.

It has already been noted that the Barnum show "profusely decorated" their cars as early as 1872. In 1877 Montgomery Queen advertised his train as being "highly ornamented," and the Great London cars indicate how far the practice had been devel-

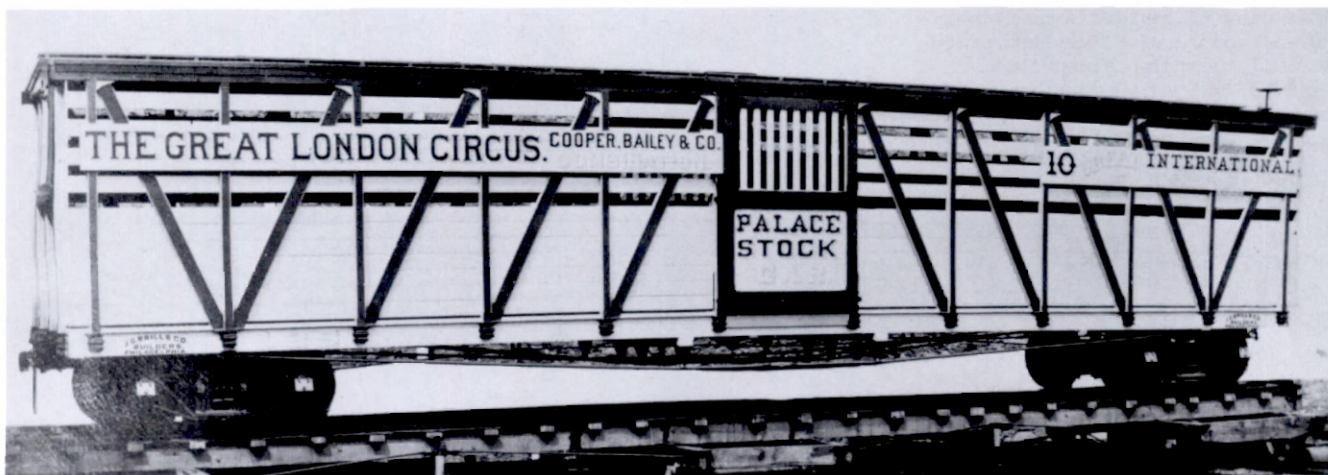
oped.¹⁶⁵ The order book does not disclose the cars' color scheme, nor has it been found in any other source. Suffice to say the body of the cars are painted in a light color, with the title in a dark color, highlighted in another color and shaded with a fourth.

The stock car was the first vehicle ordered, listed as Brill order 422, and entered on January 8, 1880. Delivery was scheduled for March 10, one month before the season opened in Philadelphia. The order entry reads "One (1) fifty ft. stock car same as sample shown." Unfortunately no earlier Brill information is available and one can only conjecture what the sample may have been. Scaling the photograph indicates the car was approximately ten feet tall. The car incorporated modified Howe trusses in the sidewalls with the wood frame stiffened by the truss rod construction. The "Palace Stock Car" inscription on the door infers it had improved interior construction, probably for the transport of ring stock.

"Two 50 ft. flat cars with sides" was Brill order 423, also entered on January 8. About January 20 an order for four additional flats was entered as Brill order 429. The car photographed was a run car, identifiable by the snubber post mounted in the middle. No evidence of the other hardware, the runs, crossover plates and gunnels, can be seen. The brakewheel is in its conventional interfering position, and presumably was designed to be removable. The flat is of wood construction reinforced by truss rods.

The Brill photographs confirm the authenticity of a Strobridge half sheet issued in 1880 depicting the show's advance brigade in operation.¹⁶⁶ The car had mostly solid sides, with every inch adorned in a flamboyant depiction of the show's assets. The artist has not been identified, but some of his work was inspired by engravings used in earlier advertisements.

It is notable that the baby elephant was given little attention, which is understandable since Columbia was not born until March 10, shortly before the car was scheduled for delivery. One side of the car featured a train scene which incorporated both



accurate and fanciful representations of the show's parade wagons. The big elephant act had its share of coverage, and the 1879 feature, the Brush light, was painted on the opposite side. The remainder of the car carried zoological, and scenes of featured acts.

The advance car was ordered January 10, 1880, entered as Brill order 424. It called for a 60 foot car with six wheel elliptic spring trucks. The presence of a hose near the couplers may indicate this vehicle was equipped with air brakes. The order entry noted it was to be the same as the "sample car," presumably the advance car the show used in 1879. The car was a modified form of the system railroad combination car, including a clerestory roof and end platforms. It is suspected the sliding roof panel may have acted as a vent for the paste boiler's exhaust.

The same day the advertising car was ordered, Brill entered order 428 on the books for the repair of another advertising car. The car was returned to the show on February 1, after it was

inspected and found to be in satisfactory condition.

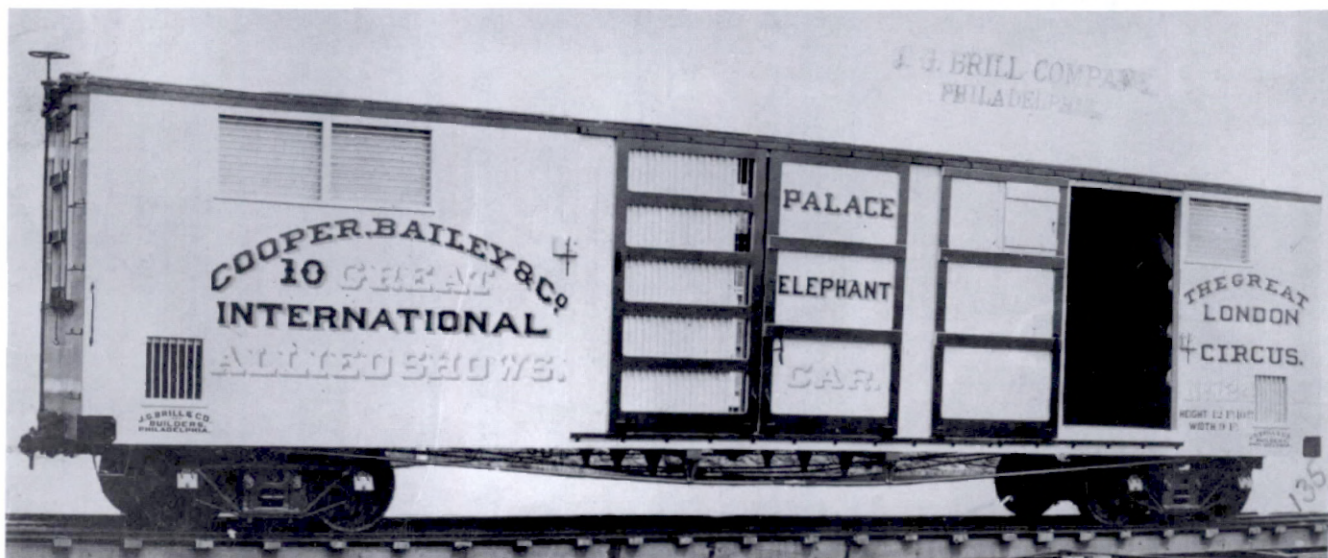
There was no mistaking the ownership of the stock car the Brill firm built for the 1880 Great London Circus. Four different colors were used in this fancy example of Victorian era car painting. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

The elephant car wasn't ordered until January 29, 1880, Brill order 435. It was described as "One elephant car same in all particulars as car we have for sample only 2" higher." It was equipped with the same standard wheels and axles as the other cars. The width and height of the car were painted on the side, probably for the use of railroad men who would have to decide whether it would clear the obstacles on the track ahead. The 12

The biggest car in the 1880 Great London train was this oversize elephant car fitted with two entrances. Although called a palace car, it is doubtful if any partitions or feeding apparatus were installed inside as in palace stock cars. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

foot 10 inch height was about 10 inches higher than a conventional stock car, but its width was less than some system cars which were 9½ feet wide. The car had external wood sheathing, probably tongue and groove, with only a few small ventilators to minimize the outside air entering the car, a concession to the elephants' delicate disposition. The sheathing probably concealed a truss system similar to that of the stock car. As with the other cars, it was of wood construction with a metal truss rod system.

The Brill cars were substantially constructed and served many years. The elephant and stock cars, or substantial duplicates, can be seen in photos of the 1889 Barnum & Bailey train wreck near Potsdam, New York. The advertising car was used as late as 1896, and may be the one Frederick Glasier photographed at Brockton, Massachusetts in 1903.¹⁰⁷ By sheer coincidence, a 1909 photograph of the Barnum & Bailey train shows flat 130, presumably the same one in the Brill shot, doing the job for which it had been constructed almost three dec-



ades earlier. The entire Great London train passed into the 1881 Barnum & London show with the possible exception of the advertising car James E. Cooper offered for sale in 1883.¹⁰⁸ Some of the Great London's 1880 newspaper ads advised that the longest car in the train measured 67 feet and the shortest 50 feet. In general terms, it was proclaimed as the finest and longest show train in the country, all of the cars being paid for.¹⁰⁹

The Barnum & London Merger

The merger of the Barnum and Great London circuses brought together the physical equipment of two of the biggest shows on the road, the assets including upwards of 100 railroad cars. To consolidate the operation, relieve themselves of excess equipment, and secure some cash, a mountain of surplus material, including rail cars, was sold at auction. The sale ad in the November 27, 1880 *Clipper* offered 10 stocks, 2 elephant cars, 1 box car, 1 sleeping coach, 2 passenger coaches and 22 flats. Described as the "rarest and latest designs," the flats were the peculiar 1876 LaMothe cars. At a private sale, the sons of "Old" John Robinson purchased the 22 flats for \$12,000.¹⁷⁰ Robinson's 1881 publicity material referred to their train of steel cars, and it was announced in the *Clipper* that they would travel on cars bought at the Barnum show auction, leading to the conclusion their 1880 Barnum sale purchase was indeed the LaMothe cars.¹⁷¹ The Robinsons used system cars to transport their show several times in the 1870's, but reverted back to overland operation in 1877.¹⁷² The acquisition of their own fleet of cars proved less than satisfactory as the entire Robinson train of 49 or more cars was offered for sale in late 1882.¹⁷³

The sale of the LaMothe cars after only five years use is surprising when one considers the life of a metal car was estimated to be 35 to 40 years, in comparison to an average life expectancy of eight to ten years for a wooden car. A number of reasons may account for their sale, the major possibility being their short length, nominally half that of the sixty foot flats which were then coming into use. Another drawback of the LaMothe cars may have been inherent in their design. With the frame members passing through the transom beam it would have been impossible to readily remove the truck as a whole for routine maintenance. In normal designs the car frame has to be lifted only several inches to allow the kingbolt clearance. In the case of the LaMothe cars, it would have been necessary to disassemble the frame to remove them intact, or to service the



The artistic exterior of the 1880 Great London car was covered over in later years by paint proclaiming the virtues of the Greatest Show on Earth. The sides of the car were covered in fancy lettering when this shot was taken in 1896. Circus World Museum.

trucks in a piecemeal fashion, either method considerably more costly than that of conventional designs. Thus the first steel cars constructed for circus use cannot be considered a complete success, especially since their design was not repeated in an extended format.

With the Barnum train being about 50 cars and the Great London fleet around 56 cars, the sale of the 38 surplus vehicles left sixty eight for the show to use. The show advertised it traveled on 77 cars in 1881, but an eyewitness report in the July 21, 1881 *Kalamazoo (Mi.) Daily Gazette* placed it on two trains of 62 cars, at least nine being horse cars. With examples of each of the Brill built cars present in post 1881 views, it suggests many of the combined show's cars originated from the Great London train, rather than the Barnum property. Henry E. Bowser, Barnum's private secretary, recorded in his diary the show's return to the Bridgeport winterquarters on November 19, noting, "Looks like it has been a hard season." After five rail mishaps, the train's wretched condition underscored the statement.

The W.W. Cole Train

Possibly the second complete circus train was built in 1881 for W.W. Cole. The Missouri Car and Foundry Co. of St. Louis supplied Cole with a 24 car train consisting of five 60 foot long flats, the balance of the elephant, stock and flat cars being fifty footers.¹⁷⁴ The train represented the fourth and final step into the realm of 60 foot cars, a length not exceeded for the next three decades. In order, the 1872 Barnum, 1877 Forepaugh, 1880 Great London and 1881 Cole purchases illustrate the development of circus owned trains, from short system style cars to long specialty vehicles suited to the circus' needs.

Footnotes

114. Italics added.
115. Lafayette (In.) *Daily Journal*, July 31, 1873.
116. Lowell (Ma.) *Weekly Journal*, June 13, 1873; Auburn (N.Y.) *Daily Journal*, July 31, 1873; Harrisburg (Pa.) *Daily Patriot*, Sept. 22, 1873.
117. McNairy, Claflin & Co. was in business by 1869, went into receivership about 1876, and was defunct by 1880. See corporation file, Cleveland Public Library.
118. The November 8, 1873 *Railroad Gazette* announced the firm had recently suspended payments, the principal cause being the failure of the railroads, the New York & Oswego Midland Co. in particular, to pay for cars delivered. A biography of William H. Cummings is in Alexander McLean, *History of Jersey City, N.J.* (Jersey City: Jersey City Printing Co., 1895), pp. 364-365. Directories indicate the firm was founded about 1849 by the Cummings' father.
119. *National Car Builder*, May 1874, p. 75.
120. Jackson (Mi.) *Daily Citizen*, May 14, 1873.
121. Cincinnati (Oh.) *Enquirer*, August 23, 1874.
122. Weld, p. 23.
123. Visitors to the Circus World Museum should note the stock car on display is a ring stock car, and not a baggage horse car.
124. Barnum described the 1874 show and the changes planned for 1875 in a letter written on January 19, 1875 to Samuel Clemens. See Saxon, *Letters*, pp. 188-191; St. Paul (Mn.) *Dispatch*, August 16, 1875.
125. Worcester (Ma.) *Evening Gazette*, May 10, 1875.
126. St. Paul (Mn.) *Dispatch*, July 9, 1875.
127. *Railroad Gazette*, February 27, 1875, p. 87. The Chicago Historical Society has a transcript of similar information from a c.1874 USRSC lithograph in their collection.
128. *History of Champaign County, Ohio* (Chicago: W.W. Beers, 1881) pp. 371-372, 375.
129. Worcester (Ma.) *Evening Gazette*, May 10, 1875; *National Car Builder*, May 1877, p. 68; 1878 Sells Bros Route Book; *Ohio State Journal*, March 8, 1880; *Bandwagon*, XIII, 6, p. 11.
130. *National Car Builder*, August 1881, p. 89.
131. *Clipper*, April 5, 1879, p. 16.
132. The Barnum title was used by Pardon A. Older in 1872 and 1873 and by John V. "Pogey" O'Brien in 1874 and 1875.
133. *Clipper*, May 16, 1891, p. 169.
134. Cleveland (Oh.) *Herald*, December 22, 1875.
135. *Clipper*, November 6, 1875, p. 256; a copy of the catalog is at the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis, Mo.
136. *New York Times*, January 21, 1876.
137. John H. White Jr., *The American Railroad Passenger Car* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1978), pp. 117-124 reviews LaMothe's



passenger car efforts. Also see "Steel Railway Cars" in *Scientific American Supplement*, II, 38 (Sept. 16, 1876) p. 596, for the wood versus steel arguments in car construction. "Metallic Railway Cars," *Scientific American Supplement*, II, 49 (December 2, 1876), pp. 772-773, reports LaMothe design platform cars had recently been built for several eastern railroads. LaMothe did not have his own manufacturing facilities, licensing several different builders through the years to build cars according to his patents.

138. Ad in the 1876 Newark (N.J.) *Daily Advertiser* for an October 4 date. The cars were actually constructed of iron; steel was not readily available in 1876.
139. *Billboard*, January 28, 1911, p. 33. When these steel cars were auctioned in 1913, they brought prices ranging from \$600 to \$1400, in comparison to the \$100 to \$300 bids received for the show's wood cars. *Billboard*, September 27, 1913, p. 25.
140. *Saxon, Letters*, pp. 196-197.
141. John Robinson circus, West Haven, Ct., July 3, 1872 in *Clipper*, July 13, 1872, p. 119; Great Eastern Circus, August 10, 1874, Schenectady to Syracuse, N.Y., in Troy (N.Y.) *Times*, August 11, 1874.
142. Kalamazoo (Mi.) *Telegraph*, June 26, 1877.
143. The letter, dated September 14, 1877, is addressed from P.T. Barnum & Co. to the National Tube Works Company, Boston, Mass., and is contained in a booklet titled "The Substitution of Iron For Wood in Car Construction." It was published after the Master Car Builder's association meeting on November 21, 1878. DeGolyer Rare Book Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. The booklet includes engravings of LaMothe design flat and box cars.
144. *Clipper*, July 13, 1867, p. 111; May 13, 1876, p. 55.

145. *National Car Builder*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (March 1877), p. 42. Although it was a major car builder, little remains to document the firm's extensive output. See Carl M. Becker, "A 'Most Complete' Factory: The Barney Car Works, 1850-1926," *Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin*, 31, 1, (Spring 1973), pp. 49-69, and H.M. Estabrook, *A History of the Barney & Smith Car Company of Dayton, Ohio* (Dayton?: J.W. Johnson, 1916). Estabrook noted that car drawings were not made until after 1860, a drawing room being established in June 1883 and professional designers hired in 1885 (p. 39). Barney & Smith later built 60 foot long elephant, stock and flat cars for Forepaugh, which he offered for sale in the November 2, 1889 *Clipper*, p. 578.
146. *Billboard*, March 19, 1910, p. 23.
147. *Clipper*, April 26, 1879, p. 39. Jake Posey, *Last of the Forty Horse Drivers* (New York: Vantage, 1959) p. 18.
148. *Detroit News*, August 30, 1882.
149. *Saturday Evening Post*, May 12, 1900, p. 1056, *National Car Builder*, August 1881, p. 89.
150. *Ohio State Journal*, August 18, 1880.
151. The wreck destroyed the car, killing six men and injuring six others. *Clipper*, September 8, 1877, p. 191.
152. Peggy and Harold Samuels, *The Illustrated Biographical Encyclopedia of the Artists of the American West* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 507-508; Dorothy Harmsen, *American Western Art* (Chicago?: Lakeside Press, 1977), pp. 230-231; Doris O. Dawdy, *Artists of the American West* (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1974), pp. 241-242. Twelve of Walker's paintings hang in the United States Defense Department Building in Washington, D.C. and others are at the Denver Art Museum and the California Historical Society. His "Battle of Chapultepec" once hung

The Brill cars were built well and lasted many years. Here is a view of Great London flat car no. 130 on the Barnum & Bailey show in 1909, carrying on the same job it had been built for almost four decades earlier. Note the sideboard in the foreground has been trimmed to provide clearance for the hookrope. Albert Conover collection.

over the west staircase in the Senate wing of the Capitol.

153. *New York Tribune*, September 24, 1893.
154. Descriptions of the car can be found in the *New York Times*, May 5, 1878; Cleveland (Oh.) *Herald*, July 5, 1878; Dayton (Oh.) *Daily Democrat*, August 2, 1878.
155. *Stark County Democrat* (Canton, Ohio), June 6, 1878; *National Car Builder*, 13 (May 1882), p. 51; photograph, California Historical Society.
156. Kalamazoo (Mi.) *Daily Gazette*, July 10, 1881, quoting the June 7, 1881 Boston (Ma.) *Herald*.
157. Tiffin (Oh.) *Tribune*, June 2, 1881, quoting the Cincinnati *Gazette*.
158. See Fred Dahlinger, "Advance Car Steam Callopes" in *Bandwagon*, XVIII, 2, p. 23, for an account of these unusual cars.
159. Forest Crissey, ed., "Booming the Big Show," *Saturday Evening Post*, 172, 36 (March 3, 1900), p. 792.
160. Cleveland (Oh.) *Herald*, July 18, 1878; Jackson (Mi.) *Daily Citizen*, July 22, 1878.
161. Richard E. Conover's pamphlet, *The Affairs of James A. Bailey* (Xenia: the author, 1957) is the best source on the career of Bailey. No recent biographies of Cooper or Hutchinson have been written.
162. Ad in Jackson (Mi.) *Daily Citizen*, May 24, 1879.
163. The demise of the Howes show is explained by Richard E. Conover in *The Fielding Band-Chariots* (Xenia: the author, 1969), p. 14. Only two rail cars were later listed among the assets of the bankrupt Howes show. *Clipper*, August 18, 1877, p. 166.
164. The J.G. Brill Co. order books and photographs are at the Pennsylvania Historical Society in Philadelphia, Pa., which kindly permitted their publication. Copies of two of the photographs were previously printed in *Railroad Magazine*, October 1962.
165. Ad in Jackson (Mi.) *Daily Citizen*, September 18, 1877.
166. Circus World Museum; See *Bandwagon*, XVII, 6, p. 11.
167. Circus World Museum; Ringling Museum of the Circus.
168. *Clipper*, March 31, 1883, p. 30.
169. Ad in Cleveland (Oh.) *Herald*, July 31, 1880.
170. *Clipper*, December 25, 1880, p. 315; Other cars were reportedly bought for the 1881 Cooper & Jackson show. See *Billboard*, March 17, 1923, p. 13.
171. Tiffin (Oh.) *Tribune*, June 2, 1881, quoting the Cincinnati *Gazette*; *Clipper*, April 9, 1881, p. 42; if all of the flats were of the LaMothe design, the show must have purchased an additional four flats after the September 14, 1877 testimonial letter was written.
172. *Clipper*, April 21, 1877, p. 31.
173. *Clipper*, November 11, 1882, p. 557.
174. Further details of this train can be found in the *Clipper*, October 23, 1886, p. 576. The earliest known whale show, operated by Fred J. Englehart and George H. Newton in 1881, used two flats, one of which measured 60 feet long. See *Ohio State Journal*, February 28, 1881 and Jackson (Mi.) *Daily Citizen*, July 8, 1881.



THE CIRCUS REPORT is published by Don Marcks, 525 Oak St., El Cerrito, Ca. 94530-3699. Phone: (415) 525-3332.

Subscription rates: \$20.00 a year. Rates to all foreign countries is \$25.00 per year via surface mail.

I first met Bev Kelley smack in the middle of Chicago's LaSalle Street. I was new on the *Billboard*, and both of us were headed for the Atwell Luncheon Club. I ran to catch up. We had corresponded before and recalled at this time that someone had questioned his facts in a story about Dailey Bros. Circus elephants in the *Saturday Evening Post*. The *Post* had asked me about it. I replied that if Bev Kelley stated that only so many elephants had been born in this country, that is the way it was. True.

He was a frequent visitor to the Atwell Club in those years. Sometimes he was ahead of the circus and sometimes he was with a Broadway show. Always he was ready with his own relaxed style of conversation that said so much about his current attraction without seeming to hype it at all. He seemed to be the most prestigious of the various agents coming to town then — Sam Stratton, Al Butler and other circus veterans then ahead of legit. A local stenographer typed all of their press material for road tours and sometimes they hired Harry Atwell for photography. I am not sure that legit shows still utilize agents in the same way. They hated the chore of finding hotels and apartments for their casts. The future life of their show rested on their publicity and advertising campaigns.

In his banter with the Chicago press, Bev gave each agent a circus-style nickname, which the entertainment editors and columnists began to use — "Center Pole Sam" and "Silent Al." Sam was tall but Al was never silent. Legitimate attractions then came to Chicago in late spring with the hopes of lasting out the summer. If business was good enough, the show could survive and play other cities in the fall. Summer was not good elsewhere, and air-conditioned theaters in Chicago helped shows weather the season. But it was essential to get good reviews in the papers if the show was to last. Otherwise, everyone's job ended. The responsibility rested with the agents.

Sam and Al, among others, fretted greatly over this as they prepared for each Chicago opening. Key to it all was the *Tribune's* reviewer, Claudia Cassidy, a flamboyant redhead given to huge fur coats and merciless reviews that closed shows. Sam and Al worried. If Bev did, he never showed it. He composed original poetry for Claudia and took it to her when they gathered at the *Tribune* on Thursdays, agents' day. I suppose they talked about his show, too. But the poems seemed to find a way to Claudia's heart and that helped with her typewriter. Likely as not, the reviews would be good.

Not a few old circus troupers died in Chicago without relatives or money in those days. The Showmen's League

Bev Kelley

By Tom Parkinson

arranged for services. They were pitiful affairs. Maybe there would be three or four of us in attendance. Usually, it was Bev Kelley who would rise to say a few words about the departed brother's contribution to show business and humanity. Bev always did a marvelous job; he had a way with those words, too.

He and I attended another funeral, the only show people to turn up in Watseka, Illinois, for the services for Frank Braden. Bev admired and loved Braden and saw him as the king of press agents. It was Bev and I who explained to the family that the florist's card signed "Johnny, Buddy and Art" had come from circus people.



Kelley was a noted author of circus articles and books. Ever the press agent, he made sure posters for the Ringling show's upcoming date in Madison Square Garden appeared in this 1954 promotional photo for the book *Clown*, which he produced with Emmett Kelly.

More often the contacts were fun. Whimsical Chicago newspaper reporters around Will Leonard were wrapped up in their St. Louis Browns Fan Club. They were real Browns uniforms and played Browns tapes. Bev joined them in hiring a railroad club car for the ride to the final Browns game. They bought up all of the remaining display of Browns souvenirs and banners, leaving the vendor baffled. I went to one session of the club in Chicago

because they were honoring Bev, perhaps for a birthday. He turned up with a huge, battered trombone case, and when he ceremoniously opened it for the club, it revealed a sign reading "The Music Man Is a Conn Man." I never knew whether the reporters realized the pun on the musical instrument makers name, but they did find reason to write again about "The Music Man."

One line in particular from "The Music Man" went straight into Bev's daily vocabulary: "You've got to know the territory." He liked to quote that whenever conversation turned to whether someone in show business was doing things right or wrong.

Kelley came on to help with publicity for the final few editions of the Schlitz Circus Parade in Milwaukee. He was a great favorite of Ben Barkin, mogul of the parade promotion and sometimes investor in Broadway productions. Of course, Kelley had come to the parade earlier as a guest and observer. For the first parade, Chapie Fox asked us to ride a Gollmar tableau and he fitted us with clawhammer coats and stovepipe hats. Tall people looked pretty ridiculous. Bev figured we must represent the grifters on this mythical circus, and forever after he referred to the Grifters' Wagon.

Not that it was his favorite wagon. Bev loved that parade and its wagons as he did everything about the circus. But one wagon — Columbus-John Smith — was his clear favorite, and he said so at every opportunity. Once he wrote, "That handsome Pawnee Bill bandwagon must be putting in a lonesome summer without its best admirers."

The parade seasons also were great times for jackpot sessions as Bev Kelley held forth in the social hours around the Pfister Hotel lobby. He acquiesced when urged to recount experiences with the likes of Maria Rasputin, Gargantua, the Norths, the Davenportes, and Felix Adler. Or the time he and Howard Y. Bary lost the giraffe neck woman some place in the Melbourne Hotel in St. Louis. His low-key manner of speaking and colorful conversation along with a great storytelling ability made these sessions priceless.

Similarly, at a CHS convention in Baraboo a few years ago, he recalled times with Clarence Darrow, the John Robinson show and others. Interviewed for the benefit of the CHS members and tape recorders gathered then, Bev responded magnificently to the quizzing about his early activities. After about a hundred pointed questions, Bev said, "After this I don't miss Clarence Darrow quite so much."

He told about how he landed his first circus story in the *National Geographic* long before. It came out that nearly

every one of the hundred or so people in the audience owned a copy of that issue nearly a half century later, certainly a tribute to the author and the article.

He worked ahead of several musicals that would play my theater. Last and best was a revival of "My Fair Lady." He had a fascinating way of speaking about whatever show he was with at the time, making news people realize that these were notable names to be reckoned with in theater. Several of them were, indeed, stars, and in this case some had been with numerous companies, even the original cast of "My Fair Lady." He flattered newspaper people in the way that he shared information about his show and cast.

In this case, I set up some newspaper and television interviews, hinting that Bev himself was as much of a story as the show. One interviewer led Bev to a Kelley classic. "Mr. Kelley," he asked, "Have you always been a press agent?"

And Bev's answer came off in the usual, low-energy, wide-eyed, melancholy manner. "No," he said. "Once I was a baby."

That took care of the outset of his career. Now he has taken care to cover the finale as well. Bev was ill much of the past two or three years. He sustained a stroke on a Christmas Eve and was in and out of hospitals with pneumonia. Between sieges he made the effort to write and telephone friends from circus days and theater times. Diligently, he answered my queries about show history and press agent procedures. He talked often with Win Partello about both circus and theater matters. He tried to catch the Ringling show in St. Louis to chat with Tony Concello. He kept up with circus and legit news and came forth with his characteristic perceptions of shows, show people, and show business.

Finally, he escaped the hospital and enjoyed time with his family at home in St. Louis. But he was quite ill. On April 3, his wife and daughter moved him to a window so he could watch a violent storm. There was hail and lightning. Thunder rolled and rumbled. Black clouds tumbled around the grey sky. This was a theatrical production for sure. When Bev was helping live shows combat TV and big-screen movies, he used a line, "The biggest screen of all — live!" Now that biggest screen of all, nature, was putting on one of its best shows.

Then the sun cut through and vied with the clouds for center stage, center ring. Someone said, "There must be a rainbow."

And the master press agent said, "Isn't there always?"

With that he died. F. Beverly Kelley was the master press agent, which is the same as saying he was the ulti-



Kelley pioneered the use of radio publicity for circuses. In this 1940 photo he is interviewing May Kovar, one of Alfred Court's trainers, and Felix Adler, the famous clown. Note canvas air conditioning ducts in background.

mate optimist. Things always looked good in Bev Kelley's eye and in his telling.

Born in St. Marys, Ohio, in 1905, Francis Beverly Kelley grew up in Delaware, Ohio, where his family had a furniture store. As a youngster, he put on magic shows and played drums in a Dixieland band. At Ohio Wesleyan University he was in college musicals and was singer-manager of the glee club, which won three state titles and toured Europe in 1928 with Bev as tour manager. Next he was a cub reporter on the *Indianapolis Times*.

In 1930 he and Ruth Stephens, also of Delaware, were married. Bev worked as a free lance writer, following the John Robinson Circus for some time. He became publicist for Clarence Darrow in a series of debates on prohibition. Late in the season he talked himself into a job with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, pioneering circus radio publicity and appearing before schools and luncheon clubs. Still in 1930, he filled his first job as advance agent for a legit show, "The Green Pastures."

When Dexter Fellows became ill in 1932, Roland Butler asked Bev to make three towns as show press agent, his first assignment in that job. For the next few seasons, he was head of the press department for Hagenbeck-Wallace and Hagenbeck-Wallace Forepaugh-Sells circuses. He returned to Ringling-Barnum in 1938, heading up the radio publicity work. In this, he scored a number of coups, including getting the Merle Evans band on the popular Fitch Bandwagon network

radio show. He also made an album of circus records at this time, and he continued to place circus stories in leading magazines.

At the time of the Hartford fire in 1944, Bev rushed back to the show and was on hand to influence key policy decisions that determined how the circus would handle its tender public relations problems of the time.

In management changes that followed the fire, Bev was aligned with Robert Ringling, who named him to head up both the press and radio departments for 1945, 1946, and 1947, the only person to fill both assignments at the same time. This was a period of great ads in the New York papers, among other quality publicity work, and it was the time when Bev put out valuable route books for historical purposes. Upon John Ringling North's return to power, there was an altercation and Bev Kelley quit the Ringling circus.

He and some other Ringling veterans turned to Dailey Bros. Circus for 1948, and Bev scored major publicity breaks with the herd of baby elephants on the show at that time. He landed the *Saturday Evening Post* story and he took a baby elephant into a Philadelphia hotel on behalf of Robert Taft's presidential campaigning. Bev and others urged the Davenports to take their circus to big cities, but they preferred their own style of operation.

Kelley next turned to Cole Bros. Circus under Jack Tavlin. As Cole's publicity chief, Bev planted the steam calliope in Harry Truman's Inaugural Parade, managed to keep the show's title prominent for all photographers, and personally shuttled buckets of water from nearby shops to the calliope boiler to keep up steam despite long delays in the parade's movement.

For 1950 he was press agent for a national tour of a jewelry display.

Earlier, in 1942-1945, he was national publicity director for the March of Dimes. He filled other posts, among them trustee of Ohio Wesleyan University, co-founder and officer of the Delaware County Fair, member of harness racing's classic Little Brown Jug Society, member of Sigma Chi, a Mason, an Elk, and a member of the CHS. For 23 years he was a member of the Lambs, historic theatrical club in New York.

At the invitation of John Ringling North, Kelley came back to Ringling in 1954, a period of great unrest on the show. But the connection did not last for long. At Detroit in mid-season, North's new executive, Milton Pickman, and Kelley had a disagreement and Kelley left the show. I happened to be in Detroit at the time and we talked late into the night about the show's difficulties.

Mixed in with all of his summers with circuses were many winters with legitimate theater companies, usually on national tours rather than in New York. With legit as with circuses, Kelley handled the best attractions and the biggest stars.

From 1959 through 1964 Kelley was general manager of the famous St. Louis Municipal Opera, an outdoor theater in which he presented 63 musicals, among them five world premieres. One was "Around the World in Eighty Days," which included elephants on stage, and another was "Meet Me in St. Louis," a salute to the 1904 world's fair with fireworks for the finale. Then he returned to Broadway tours. He also was with the Bill McGaw Motor Circus and the Spanish Boys' Circus.

Kelley donated circus material to the Circus World Museum and theatrical memorabilia to Ohio Wesleyan University.

He was typical of many show business advance people in his preference for trains, avoidance of planes, and settling for buses. He rarely drove his own car. He was not so typical of many show people in that he almost always interrupted his week's road work on the advance of a show to spend part of the weekend at home with his family.

Kelley was fond of show people in general and circus people in particular. But he said, "The circus people made me intolerant of show people who are not troupers first of all — even above talent." He transferred other circus attributes to the legit business, including more frequent use of outdoor advertising. His legit letterheads sometimes looked like circus printing and he issued route cards for legit shows.

In discussing endangered species problems for circuses, Kelley said "It worries me somewhat that circus advance press agents are in that cate-



Classic Kelley. Typing copy for the publicity department of the Greatest Show on Earth, circa 1940.

gory." He always believed that nothing would equal personal calls by press agents, as opposed to mailed publicity material.

Kelley's under-stated way of speaking and an active sense of humor thrived on jokes and observations with a show business twist. He asked if I were playing a particular musical for a split week, and I said that it was to be only a one-night stand. After he heard the names of the stars, he said, "It sounds as if one night will be enough."

Bev Kelley's stock in trade was a unique way of speaking about his cur-

Kelley and Vander Barquette, both in typical garb, discuss the state of the world on the Cole show during the 1949 season.



rent attraction. He made a prosaic statement about his star sound as if it were a profound observation on a much-debated matter in which the star came out on top. He liked to categorize things; thus, "Wish You Were Here," which included a swimming pool on stage, became a tank show to Bev. He liked to create tags and labels.

He called "Zorba" a lumber camp because it carried so much equipment and scenery. "But of course, Hal Prince shows always are heavy," he said. He loved these flat statements, generalizations. He rarely said that he was on the advance or going ahead of a show. Instead he said he fronted it. And the outfits that he fronted were not mere shows; they were frolics. When a frolic he fronted came to a city for an extended run, he said it dropped anchor.

One of the many things I tried to learn from Bev Kelley is how to give complimentary tickets. Not that it is difficult to unload free tickets. But to present them with style and class was a Bev Kelley accomplishment. One of his neatest soft professional ploys came near the end of any report he made about a new show he would front and where it would be playing. He casually said in passing, "Let me know if you need anything." That was his offer for tickets along the route.

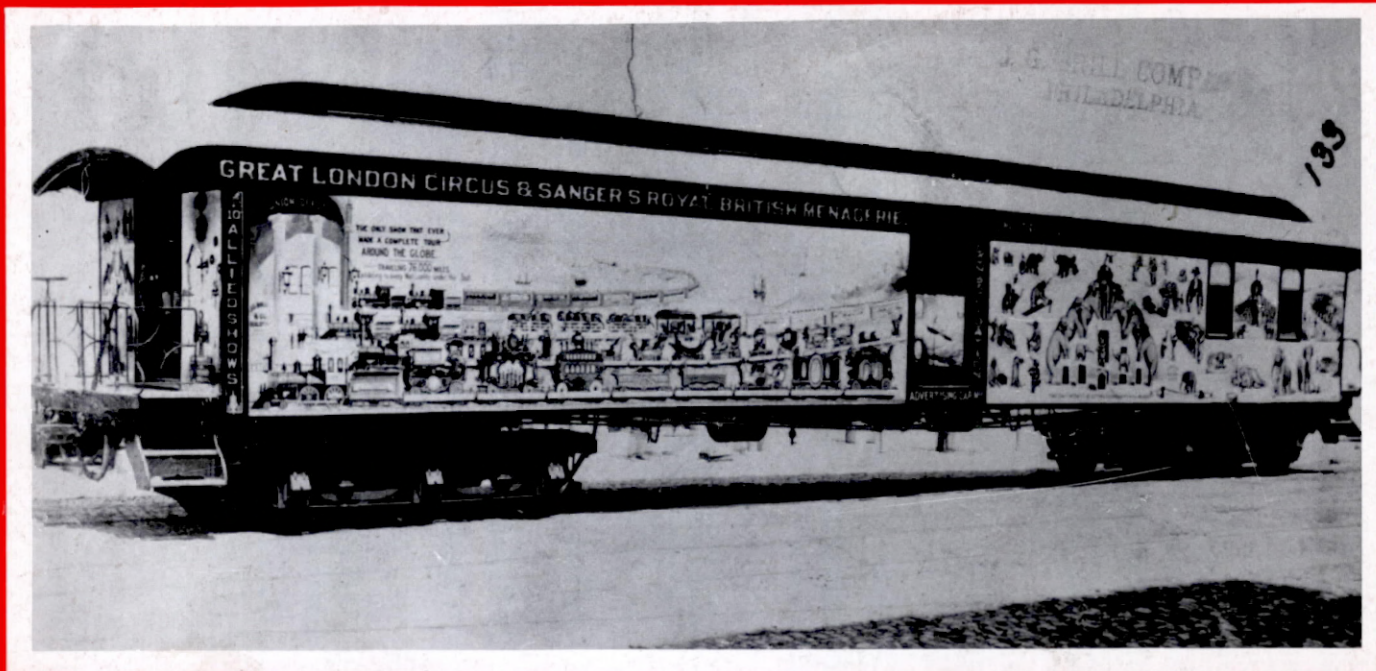
When his show was in town, he didn't let you ask for tickets; it was only a matter of what night you would be going. One always felt honored, never imposing. Come to think about it, he also was saying that, naturally, everyone will want to see this particular show; he was a press agent.

I think the greatest free pass I ever got was the privilege of watching Bev Kelley at work in his beloved craft of press agency.

He is survived by his widow, Ruth Kelley, who is an interior decorator and operated her own business. She founded and headed the Department of Interior Design at Temple University in Philadelphia. Their four children are Stephen Beverly Kelley, Waynesville, N.C.; Mrs. Robert S. (Kathleen) Vogt, Richmond Heights, Mo.; Mrs. James (Patricia) Cook, Kokomo, Ind., and Mrs. Philip (Rebecca) Kline, Philadelphia. There are 14 grandchildren.

Memorial services were conducted in St. Louis and Delaware, Ohio.

Books written by F. Beverly Kelley include: *Fun by the Ton*; *Pink Lemonade*; *Clown* (with Emmett Kelly), later made into a TV film; *Kathleen Visits the Fair*; *Circus Holiday*; *Denver Brown and the Traveling Town*; *The Language of Show Biz* (principal contributor); *The Great Circus Street Parade* (with C.P. Fox); *It Was Better than Work*, autobiography, 1983.



The imagination of many boys must have been set on fire when they saw this rolling billboard manufactured by the J.G. Brill Co. for Cooper and Bailey's Great London Circus in 1880. The parade wagons are scaled wrong as more than one would have fit on a flat car, and are a combination of the fantastic and the faithful. Some of them, such as the two telescoping tableaus are fairly accurate representations of the actual vehicles, while others never existed except on the side of this car. The opposite side of the advance car featured the Brush electric light of 1879, some arena scenes, and depictions of animal life. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.